

The Gleaner

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TO LAUGH

I laugh at just about everything Would you rather I wept? Does it annoy you that I giggle At seemingly nothing? I am not afraid Because I know who I am I am wild I am strong I will love And I refuse to hate I am tired of being sad and lonely I choose to live Come with me if you like Look at the stars and walk to feel the breeze Let night close around you And whisper its secrets Sing without reason or restraint Laugh at yourself and finally be happy Or do I scare you With my childish behavior? So be it I still laugh

Gabrielle E. Gordon

Depth

Sometimes I am shy when I look into your eyes. Your eyes are like the key to the diary that lies within. Sometimes when I look deep into your eyes I think I can almost see your past through them. I see your memories, aches, pleasures, your everything! Your eyes are like an imaginative book that I never get tired of reading. I flip through the pages cautious to take in the whole story, not missing a detail and while doing so, provoking so many thoughts as if I were trying to predict the end of the story. If you did not look away I don't know how long I would gaze into your eyes. When you looked away I wished you would have given me more time to drift and then I wonder if our journeys were mutual and you could see as deep into my eyes as I did into yours. -Asia Nicole Shipley

Drawing by Julie Demet

My Marine

-Rebecca Stopyra

Dedicated to PFC Pichardo

if the world takes you away, my love all i can do is pray if the end of this is war, to solve the terror of that day

if the world takes you away, my love my soul will cry for you but i know while you're protecting me my heart will be with you

it's so sad to see the ignorant uneducated minds and the hatred flow on people who don't share supporting ties

and the thousands that will surely feed the just cause of our wrath might have been a harbor love but blindly chose that path

and i wish somehow we could seehude these with the evil plan because they are the enly enes who should pay for our broken land

se I pray that we are right with God For He alone is all pray Lord be You by our side the enemies to fall when the world takes you away, my love be faithful to your state without ceasing i will pray for you and the swiftest rictory date

when the world takes you away, my leve my soul will cry for you but i knew while you're pretecting me my heart will be with you

and the theusands who have died that day their rengeance will be quelled while the buildings slow their smeldering beneath the thick smoke belt

we're not yet sure how to lay the law but punishment is due justice will be swift and thorough this we know is true

we place our hands together now in this our time of grief we wave our banner proudly now and its symbol brings relief

as the world takes you away, my love my soul is torn in two but i know as you're protecting me my heart is there with you I never understood my dreams until I stood upon the open sea.

A commotion of what was, is, and will be.

Each crashing wave is the eye that helps me see.

A unique landscape that prescribes the salty air that I breathe.

Each sea gull Cry...

Each teary eye ...

Each sail swaying in the wind...

Is another challenge that must begin.

Forcing us to never quit.

But to enjoy life on this perfect ship.

Rocking upon a circle of seasons.

The ocean never changes its reasoning.

With the tenacious strength of a titan.

But do not be frightened.

Appreciate autumn

giving way to ash to dust.

Lazy summer afternoons

that abandon age's timely rust.

Replacing our proper fathoms of certainty.

With the innocence of a child's purity.

I take each minimal step...

With no regrets.

Confident in a simple lighthouse.

It reminds me that I am only the size of a mouse.

Within the complex realms

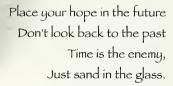
of a gigantic universe.

It had to come to this to appreciate one of life's

greatest lessons learned.







In the blink of an instant Your ship slips away, And all that you wish for Is just one more day.

~Sarah Jacobs





I have always wondered what it would feel like to Be in Love...

I had imagined it would be the greatest feeling in the world-finding someone who knows you so well - It's almost as if they know you better than you know yourself. It's spending time with that person and not realizing, or even caring, about the amount of time that passed.

It's looking at that special someone when they don't realize it and smiling a know-all smile just because. It makes the day a little easier to begin knowing that someone special is thinking of you.

It's trust. Trust that when you are not together, your love will not be forgotten,

that kisses and other things that should only be shared between couples will only be shared between the two of you.

It's knowing that your significant other wants to be with you and wants you to be happy in whatever you choose to do. It's after being together for a period of time, knowing in your heart you would choose to be with that person all over again.

It's laughing and crying-standing by through times that are tough. It's like a warm blanket on a cold night.

Love doesn't hurt

It's a goodnight kiss, it's a note, a call to say hello, it's a look, it's a feeling of

Wowl



Echoes From Eleven Days Into September

By:

Joshua David Sanders

To correct the misinformed, September was the cruelest month, at least of my life.1 September 11th, 2001, was the day of Daedalus, when winged creatures crashed into the earth,2 and when valiant men and women, hearing the Siren's song, jumped from aluminum cliffs.3 It was the best of humanity, it was the worst of humanity.4 Ashes, Ashes, fell down all around everyone.5 Both Richard Cory 6 and little Oliver Twist 7 suffered that day, as Charon ferried them across the river.8

Yet, here I am, the one who would prefer not to. 9! would prefer not to think about the things that I saw that day. I would prefer not to think about the things that I thought that day. I would prefer not to remember. Months ago, I watched the bombs burst in midair above the towers in honor of the rebels of the 18th century.10 Weeks ago, those towers burst in midair. I saw it through the red glare of tears in my eyes.11 And akin to my forefathers, my very existence on this orb, spinning free through space, seems to be a testament and a memorial to the spirit of this country to rebuild.12 Like the rebels of yore, I have seen my brethren bleed, cry, and die.13 No one seems to be able to tell us why.14 Were the twin towers our Heorot?15 Or were they reincarnations of Babel's great creation?16 Was this a punishment for flying too close to Elysian fields?17 Does this mean that imperialist pigs are more equal than capitalist pigs?18 Whatever the reason for this last time unto the breach,19 the times they have a changed.20
These are the times that try everyone's souls. New Yorkers, Washingtonians, Pennsylvanians, Americans.21 We have eaten pomegranate seeds. The grey and ashen have walked amongst us.22

The eyes of the world are watching now.23 The lion sleeps no more.24 This land is our land.25 We are donning our great white suit and heading down the river.26 Good begets good; evil begets evil.27 However, I wonder if the baby boomers in power are planning to land white doves in the sands of Afghanistan?28 Well, at least our President is sending the Afghani children dollars, instead of selling them for dollars.29

That is there, this is now.30 New York is sitting under the sword of Damocles waiting for an unknown ghost of our own society to snap the strained horse hair.31 In this time since the llth, we've all grown old, so old that we wear the legs of our trousers rolled.32 We walk like pedestrians on the road to Sleepy Hollow, wondering when the horseman will come for us.33 Americans, all of us scared children in this new world of terrorism, are crying "witch," praying the aldermen of the town will rescue us and keep us safe.34

We are told that America is sick and that the worm crawls within our own belly.35 There is no tyger amongst us with eyes burning bright.36 The question is not what is next, we know that in one word: death. What is unknown is who, where, when, and how.

Have we entered a brave new world?37 1 don't feel very brave, yet I am not afraid of fear.38 My mind goes on walkabout more often lately. What my mind sees and what mine eyes have seen 39 are wholly different parts of the elephant.40 I find myself reflecting on my childhood more often, a search for my own paradise now lost.41 Were not the children of Afghanistan taught by "friends" of Uncle Sam to sing songs while skipping in line?42

I ascend from the underbelly of the streets to hear the bagpipes on Fifth Avenue crying for so many, too many, Danny Boys.43 l look south on West Broadway and hear havor resound and clang in mine brain. The dogs of war have been let loose.44 l hear sirens and my heart drops to the bottom of the lake of Cassius. Brutus, and Judas.

Where is Si Ling, the Heron? 46 What's next? For here we are not afraid to follow truth wherever it may lead, nor to tolerate error so long as reason is free to combat it.47 However, it is dangerous to be right when the government is wrong.48 There has never been a perfect government, because men have passions; and if they did not have passions, there would be no need for 49 government.

So, I shall not be afraid of whomever does their bit for king or country 50. Let him take his chance, if he so lead, I'll be there.51 Not to follow, but to resist 52.1 will not go gently into that good night. 53 Start spreading the news.54 We will rage against the dying of our freedom.55 1 may have preferred not to write these words 56 Now, hear my roar.57 1 sound my barbaric YAWP over the roofs of the world.58 I have survived.59 One life is all we have and we live it as we believe in living it, and then it is gone.60

In three words I can sum up everything I've learned about life since September 11, 2001 - It goes on.61 So we beat on ... boats against the current.62

- Eliot, T.S. The Wasteland
- ² Greek Mythology: Daedalus and Icarus
- ³ Homer. The Odvssey
- ⁴ Dickens, Charles. Tale of Two Cities
- ⁵ Ring around the Rosey, a nursery rhyme about the plague.
- 6 Robinson, Edwin Arlington, "Richard Cory"
- Dickens, Charles, Oliver Twist,
- 8 Greek Mythology: boatsman for the river Styx.
- 9 Melville, Herman. "Bartleby the Scrivener"
- 10 July 4, 2001 Fireworks display from Liberty Island
- in New York Harbor
- 11 Key, Francis Scott. "Star Spangled Banner"
- 12 Grateful Dead, "Throwing Stones"
- 13 Shakespeare. The Merchant of Venice
- 14 Lennox, Annie. "Why"
- 15 Anonymous. Beowulf
- 16 Anonymous. The Holy Bible, Genesis xi
- 17 Greek Mythology, Daedalus & Icarus,
- 18 Orwell, George. Animal Farm
- 19 Shakespeare, William. King Henry V. Act iii. Sc.1
- ²⁰ Dylan, Bob. "The Times They Are A-Changing"
- ²¹ Paine, Thomas. The Crisis (1776-1777)
- ²² Greek mythology "Persephone". See also *The Iliad* 09.569
- 771dd 051205
- 23 Gabriel, Peter. "Biko"
- ²⁴ Weiss, George David; Peretti, Hugo; and
- Creatore, Luigi. "The Lion Sleeps Tonight"
- 25 Guthrie, Woody. "This Land Is Your Land"
- 26 Conrad, Joseph . The Heart of Darkness
- ²⁷ Chinese Proverb
- 28 Dylan, Bob. "Blowing in the Wind"
- 29 Swift, Jonathan. "A Modest Proposal."
- 30 Hinton, SE."That Was Then. This Is Now"
- 31 Courtier at the court of Dionysius I
- 32 Eliot, T.S. "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"
- 33 Hawthorne, Nathaniel .The Legend of Sleepy Hollow
- 34 Miller, Arthur, The Crucible

- 35 Blake, William, "The Rose"
- ³⁶ Blake, William. Songs of Innocence and Experience.
- 37 Huxley, Aldous. Brave New World
- ³⁸ Roosevelt, Franklin D. "The only thing to fear is fear itself."
- 39 Howe, Julia Ward. "Battle Hymn of the Republic"
- ⁴⁰ Anecdote relating to the perceptions of three blind men and their first encounter with an elephant.
- 41 Milton, John, Paradise Lost
- 42 Spark, Muriel. The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie.
- 43 "Danny Boy," old Irish folksong.
- 44 Shakespeare, William. Julius Caesar
- ⁴⁵ Dante. Inferno. Canto XXXIV
- ⁴⁶ These are both synonyms for a phoenix, a symbol of immortality, resurrection and life after death.
- 47 Jefferson, Thomas, Letter to William Roscoe.

Monticello December 27, 1820.

- 48 Arouet, François Marie (Voltaire)
- 49 Arouet, François Marie (Voltaire)
- 50 Anonymous, "I've done my bit for King and Country"
- 51 Cokayne, Sir Aston. The Tragedy of Ovid. Act 4,

Scene VI

- ⁵² Mill, John Stuart. (British economist and philosopher (1806-1873)) On Nature
- $^{\rm 53}$ Thomas, Dylan. "Do Not Go Gentle Into That

Good Night"

- 54 Sinatra, Francis, "New York, New York"
- $^{\rm 55}$ Thomas, Dylan. "Do Not Go Gentle Into That

Good Night"

- 56 Melville, Herman." Bartleby the Scrivener"
- ⁵⁷ Anonymous.
- 58 Whitman, Walt. Leaves of Grass
- 59 Gaynor, Gloria. "I will survive"
- 60 Joan of Arc.
- 61 Frost, Robert.
- 62 Fitzgerald, F. Scott. The Great Gatsby



Photo by Vicci Valenti

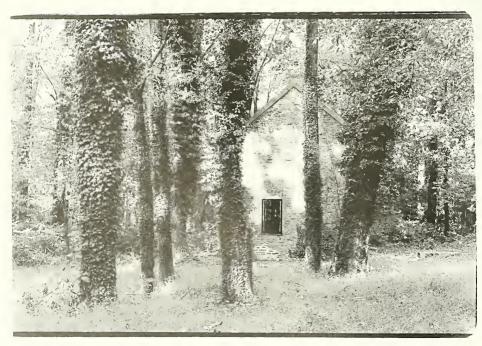


Photo by Andy Lewis

My skin rich, My lips full strength and soul enrooted in my blood, the pain of my forefathers can be seen deep within the mysterious crystals of my eyes, my voice shares distant echoes of my ancestors who revealed their deepest emotions with the majestic beauty of their song, it is from their enduring struggles that I have inherited my drive, passion, and realized the beauty of who I am, who they were and how we will be forever linked.

Mercy

her dark, sunken eyes, deep shadows echoed the lines of her scrunched up face revealing just how long she must have held her frowning disposition, all of her pain was there, in her eyes, as if she were being pulled apart, one tiny fiber after another, the measure of her pain was injected into my soul as our eyes met and locked into alignment the pain...

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what has gotten me?

Rebecca Stopyra

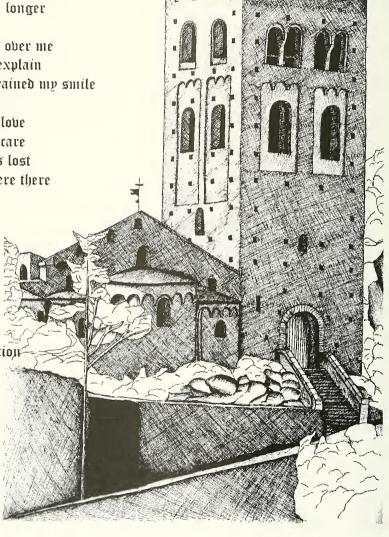
tonight will be a long night not unlike any other i choose not to cherish my sleep like others i cherish no longer

what has seem to come over me is something i cannot explain although i know it's drained my smile

it will not allow me to love it will not allow me to care only to dwell on what's lost of feelings that once were there

please wake me up oh please let me sleep please pick me up so i no longer weep

i want happiness
i want to be free
i want to see my reflectione
and know that it's me



Drawing by Julie Demet



The Lesson

Michelle Matthews-Wild

"Is this how I'm going to die?" raced through my mind as I hung there, suspended underwater and upside down. I felt the light swish of the water as a fish swam by my head. I began to panic. I groped desperately through the murky water for the small piece of rubber cord that could release me from my bondage.

I had always been the adventurous type. But kayaking is something that I had not done before. So when my friends, Susan and Mona, called about a two-day kayak course, I was more than happy to join them. I could do anything... or so I thought.

We met with the other would-be kayakers on the New Jersey side of the Delaware River. The class began by learning how to get out of an overturned kayak in the river. On my first two attempts. I quickly found the pull cord for the neoprene skirt that secured me into the kayak. I managed to take in only a quart or so of river water through my nose. With a sloshing head and floating eyeballs, I thought, "Am I having fun yet?" On my third try, I couldn't think straight and I went into a complete panic. I thrashed wildly, banging my legs along the inside of the kayak. As I struggled to free myself from this most awful death contraption. I arched my back and banged my head on the back of the kayak. If not for the safety helmet, I would most certainly have suffered a major concussion, if not a fractured skull. I'm sure I drained the river a full 1/4" with all the water I ingested that time. The instructors finally swam out to where my kayak had drifted and helped me escape. I half swam and half crawled to the riverbank and washed down a few Advil with clean, clear water. My head and neck were already beginning to hurt. It took a long time before I caught my breath. I had to repeat this torture, said the instructors, "...until you feel comfortable with it." So I rolled the kayak, filled my nose, lungs, and everything else with water, gave myself whiplash as I struggled like hell, bruised my legs, finally swam free, dragged my half submersed vessel to the shore, tipped and emptied out the water. Sure, this felt comfortable! I was becoming tired and scared, but I would never admit it.

Finally I was ready for the group river trek. After four hours of learning "eddy turns," "peel outs," "surfing," and other kayak techniques on the river, I was exhausted and I still couldn't paddle straight for more than twenty feet. I would spin around claiming to admire the scenery. After three more hours, I was past exhaustion. I had lost all feeling in my legs and arms. I was sure I was close to death. Then I heard the sound of rushing water. I tricked my kayak into heading in the right direction and saw a vast expanse of white water ahead of me. There was no way to go around. I had been rafting and canoeing enough to know that you always take the rapids straight on and paddling. So into the rapids I went. Talk about an adrenaline surge! What made it more interesting were the people on lemon and lime colored inner tubes floating randomly through this

area. (This may give you an idea of the true severity of these rapids.) I dodged those tubers with my new found deft ability while fighting the rapids! I almost enjoyed this part of the trip.

By hour eight, I was so completely spent that I was ready to "abandon kayak" and swim for it or hijack one of those tubes. Suddenly, a bolt of lightning ripped through the sky. The thunder that followed was deafening. As the torrential rain pounded down on me, I began to have trouble seeing the shoreline. Just then, I heard one of our instructors yelling to me. She had just landed at the take out point and was waving me over. I somehow mustered enough energy to make it to the shore. I wanted to kiss that muddy ground until I saw what the first leg of this day's adventure was. I had to carry the kayak, paddle, and water-laden gear up the riverbank and then up a very large, steep slope, slipping in the muddy and pounding rain the whole way. I didn't know that Mt. Everest is only about ten miles below Frenchtown. Somehow I made it, but I wondered what fun would be in store for the next day.

On the way home that day, Susan, Mona, and I decided to stop by a pub for hot soup and a beer. Our shoes made squishing sounds, leaving small puddles of water everywhere we stepped. With our helmet hair and smelly filthy clothes from the river and mud slope, the patrons looked at us in disgust. I was beyond caring. I just 17 couldn't wait to let the cool ale wash clean the bad taste in my mouth and soothe the injuries to my pride. I had not done very well at this endeavor. I couldn't lift the mug.

That night, as I lay bed, everything hurt. My breathing was labored as my lungs tried to clear out the filthy, germ-ridden water that remained. I had never known such exhaustion. I could hardly move. This had been too much work and more dangerous than I had ever imagined. I knew I would not recover in time to endure the same punishment again the next day.

I struggled with the decision most of the night. I had never "wussed out" before. I never quit. But I just couldn't do it again. I swallowed my pride. I called Susan and for the first time in my life I uttered those forbidden words, "I can't." To my great relief, Susan said that she and Mona were not going either. They were staying home with their heating pads and bottles of Advil.

We didn't go to that second day of class. I wonder if anyone did.

--Michelle not-so-Wild-anymore

larry Stelmach The Horizontal Engineer

Gary's future father-in-law nicknamed him the horizontal engineer. That was because whenever Gary was visiting the house, his fiancée's father would invariably find Gary stretched out on the sofa in front of the TV. The only time he saw Gary in a totally vertical position was going to the dinner table or going out the door.

Gary Ruddel was an instrumentation engineer. He and I worked at the same research lab for three years. Gary was responsible for maintaining the instrumentation of the pilot plant that I managed. We rented a house together and so he was also my roommate for three years (along with his exgirlfriend). But I'm getting ahead of myself.

The company we worked for made emulsion polymers with a chemical called vinyl acetate. When you hear the words "emulsion polymers," all you need to do is picture Elmer's Glue. Everything we made looked like Elmer's Glue. However, it was used for more things than the stuff used to make art projects out of construction paper. For example, it was used to make paint. Paint is just glue you put on your wall that has pigment dispersed in it for color. But it still has the properties of glue. That is why it sticks to the wall. Chewing gum is also a polymer made of vinyl acetate. That is why it sticks to your shoes.

In the pilot plant, we developed new products in 15-gallon stainless steel reactors. The reactors were touchy. You could make two batches of polymer back to back and they would come out with totally different performance properties. The reason for this is a little complicated. I could talk to you about reaction set points, crosslinking, inhibitors, polymer chain length, and a dozen other factors. It boils down to the fact that different is bad when you are trying to make the same product over and over again. Having the instrumentation properly set and functioning correctly was critical to doing the same thing every time. Having a good instrumentation engineer helps to avoid many problems.

An older engineer, who was responsible for one of the plants where I scaled-up our new products, told me that the perfect instrumentation engineer has to be sloth-like in movement and temperament. A normally active person would be in too much of a hurry to really tune, to really balance the instrumentation. A normal person would get impatient and make too many quick changes. The perfect engineer would make a minor change and sit and stare at the instrument for what would be an eternity to most people before even considering another change.

Having the right temperament to be an instrumentation engineer is not without its cost from a personality standpoint. Engineers are usually not noted for their abundance of personality, their ability to put people at ease with their witty conversation, their ability to attract and keep gorgeous members of the opposite sex or their athletic prowess. An instrument engineer has the engineer-

ing personality squared. Gary was the perfect instrumentation engineer.

Everything about Gary seemed to be in slow motion. He ate meals slowly and methodically. He walked slowly. He talked slowly. He has a sports car (a real image breaker there), but he drove it slowly. He would not exceed the speed limit on any road under any conditions.

There were some advantages Gary enjoyed in his life at half speed. He never said anything that sounded as it were not well thought out. This made him difficult to have an argument with. He never seemed to forget anything. However, meeting girls was not an area where his half-speed life was an advantage.

It wasn't that Gary lacked female companionship. He was fairly good looking and could usually get a first date. He was fearless in the face of rejection. He would approach girls in bars, convenience stores, at work, Gary kept pitching; the only girls who were hitting tended to be quiet and introverted types. He told me that he longed for a girl to bring excitement into his life. Then Toni came along.

Toni was a girl Gary met just after we rented a house in Greenbrook, New Jersey. They met on a blind date his sister had arranged. Toni had been living in Philadelphia with an outfielder who played for the Philadelphia Phillies. They broke up when she found out that he was playing away games. He had a girlfriend in every National League City. He had a tough time understanding why Toni was so upset; she was his number one girl. After all, the Phillies played 81 home games.

Anyway, they broke up and Toni moved back to Delaware to live with her mother. This made her a little bit of a GU (geographically undesirable) for Gary. The drive to see her was just under three hours away by car if Gary was driving and about an hour and 50 minutes if Toni was driving. They seemed to be such opposites that I was fascinated as to how they got along so well.

Toni seemed like a just opened bottle of champagne. She bubbled over with energy and conversation. She didn't seem to take anything too seriously; she had a sarcastic streak. Whereas everything that Gary said seemed so well founded, Toni seemed to say anything that flashed through her mind. She would try anything and she would throw boundless enthusiasm into any exercise. She liked to go out. She took Gary to parties, clubs, the theatre, art exhibits and anything that seemed interesting to her. Toni was so spontaneous that they might end up doing anything but what they started out to do.

At first, Gary gamely went along. This girl was totally different from the quiet and reserved girls he usually dated. This was a lifestyle he thought he wanted. Engineering can be tedious and boring. This was anything but boring.

Gary was in love. His brain was flooded with the chemicals of love: noradrenalin, phenylethylamine and dopamine. He was always smiling. He took to whistling. He even wrote poetry to

her. It was almost painful to watch. He would spend hours laboring over a poem. One of the ones I remember had a couplet:

The man from New Jersey saw her and his heart began to pump The girl from Delaware discovered that he was not a chump

Which only goes to show that art is a little more than inspiration and perspiration after all. Toni searched and got a job in New Jersey after they had been going together for almost two years. As it turned out, that was exactly the time their romance faltered.

Gary just got tired. When I hear other people say this about their relationships, I think they mean they no longer find the other person interesting and attractive compared to someone else. This wasn't true with Gary. He still found Toni attractive. He got tired physically and mentally with the whirlwind lifestyle. He wasn't getting his nine hours of sleep anymore. He felt like he didn't fit in anywhere that he and Toni went. He didn't find much in common with her friends and they were constantly making fun of his lack of conversation. One of them said that Gary made Clint Eastwood look like William F. Buckley in comparison. Gary found Toni's gentle barbs a little sharper. Toni herself felt that she was changing for the worse. She was tired too. She felt like she always had to drag Gary along. A thoroughbred pulling a milk wagon is how I pictured it. So they broke up, but with a difference. Toni moved into the house with us as a new roommate.

They broke it to me nicely. They said that Toni needed a place to stay for a while because of the new job. They said that since the house had an extra bedroom this would be a good way to lower the rent for me. They said I could have the big bedroom upstairs while they took the two small bedrooms downstairs. They said that they were both adults and could handle living together. Toni gave me a plant and a box of candy as a sort of "thank you for not being a jerk about me moving in" present. She should have given me a striped referee's shirt and a whistle.

At first things went ok. Toni and Gary may even have slept together once or twice in the first month. I really couldn't tell (as I could later with Gary's fiancée who was a screamer during amorous exercises). But, they started to have little arguments. Toni would begin with a few gentle barbs and progress to things with more bite. Gary would just stare at her and get red in the face, until he said something so direct and hurtful that Toni would run back to her room crying. If it had been a prizefight, Toni would win rounds one through nine and would be knocked out with a well-timed haymaker in the tenth round. Fight after fight it was the same pattern. Then, there was a change that shifted the balance of power in Toni's favor.

Toni started to date. She was a little chunky, but she was very pretty. Witty conversation was her specialty. She had no trouble finding dates (and high quality ones at that). She dated a doctor, a lawyer, and a golf pro in the space of six weeks. This had a profound effect on Gary. I guess he didn't expect her to date while she lived with us or else he thought that by living together he could settle her down. Whichever, Toni's dating was something he couldn't handle. He stopped talking to Toni (although sometimes it was hard to tell) and he started to go out to bars.

20

Gary started to go to singles bars six nights a week. Once in a while, I would go with him. But, it wasn't much fun. Gary would get a beer, stand in the corner and watch for an opportunity to meet a girl. It was noise with the band playing, so his pick-up line was "Dance?" This worked pretty well until there was a lull in the music. If the girl was a talker, everything would be ok. If the girl wanted conversation, she would stay with Gary about five minutes into the break, look at her watch and excuse herself.

Gary, on these bar excursions, would become less and less particular as the night rolled on. And it was invariably his mission to try to bring someone home to stay overnight to show Toni that he had a life too. For a couple of weeks, over breakfast, Toni and I would see the newest member of an odd collection of women leave our house. It was just the opening that Toni needed. One morning, after one hygienically challenged young lady left the house, Toni looked up at Gary from the breakfast table. "Going to write her a poem?" She had a saccharin lilt to her voice. Gary didn't say anything. Toni said, "How about something like:

A girl, a sigh, it's late, why not a try?
The dawn, some light, my God an awful sight."

I thought Gary's head was going to explode. He moved three inches from her face, gasping, searching for something to say. He couldn't think of anything. He turned and went out the door.

Toni stabbed her fork in the air and said, "Then, as I end the refrain, thrust home." It wasn't until I was watching a Jose Ferrer movie three years later that I realized she was quoting a line from Cyrano. Quite impressive for a girl who graduated from the University of Delaware with a marketing degree.

The feud was on. They no longer liked anything the other did. I tried to avoid any conversation when they were both in the room because they would try to enlist me to their side on whatever issue they were disputing. There was one issue I could not avoid getting pulled into.

One week, Toni started hearing noises at night. She also thought she saw something. She accused Gary of letting a bat loose in the house to scare her. This all happened while I was out of town working on a scale-up of a new product going into our plant in Calvert City, Kentucky. I got paragraph after paragraph on the phone from Toni. Gary's only input was "She's got bats in her belfry." This was pretty witty for Gary.

I got home on Saturday morning after a plane ride back from Kentucky. No one was around. Toni had gone home to Delaware to visit her mother. Gary had gone to Pennsylvania to see his sister graduate from college. There was a note for me in Gary's handwriting on the kitchen table lying on top of a tennis racquet. The note read: "Guess Toni was right. I chased the bat up into your bedroom. This racquet is good protection." I looked up the stairs and the door to my room was closed.

I am not a particularly brave person. On those personality tests (the ones with questions like: "Would you rather be a florist or a coal miner"), I fall strongly under the category: Risk Averse.

However, if I wanted my room back, I was going to have to deal with the bat. My major concerns were one, finding the bat, and two, convincing it to leave with the least amount of trouble and stress. Then, I thought I had a brainstorm.

The neighbor's cat had always been very well disposed toward us because of Toni. She loved cats and had been feeding the neighbor's cat treats. The cat was always hanging around our back door. I went outside and sure enough, she was there.

I picked her up and took her in the house. I had the cat cradled in one arm and the tennis racquet in the other hand as I climbed the stairs. I also had on my hard hat from work. I had heard that bats could get caught in your hair and the hard hat seemed like a reasonable precaution. I cautiously opened the door to my room. There was no sign of anything amiss. I took a half step into the room. Still nothing. I looked down at the cat in my arms. She had a very focused look on her face and was staring up intently at something just above my shoulder. I tilted my head to follow her gaze and came face to face with a bat hanging upside down in the doorway a few inches from my nose.

My response did not do me much credit. I yelled "ahhhhhhhhhhhhh" and backpedaled into the room away from the doorway. This scared the cat and she tried to claw her way up to safety on top of my shoulder by using my torso as a tree trunk. She jumped down on the floor as I half fell down. With my shoulder bleeding I looked back at the doorway. The bat was still hanging there. I had to decide what to do.

Outside of insects, I have never killed anything. On my own in the wild, I would probably starve. I didn't want to kill this little brown creature hanging upside down in my doorway. I needed a plan to get it outside. I got a shoebox, crept up to the bat and pushed the shoebox tightly against the doorjamb. What happened next surprised me. The bat woke up (no surprise) and tried to fly away. The three-inch bat had wings that appeared to be two feet wide. These wings appeared over the sides of the box. I slapped the lid on and ran down the stairs with a shoebox that had sprouted wings. I got outside, threw the box towards the woods and the bat disappeared into the trees next to the house.

I was a little down on Gary after that. His explanation that he had tried to chase the bat into Toni's room (and had missed) didn't mollify me. I refused to go out to the bar scene with him. Instead, I would stay home. On nights Toni stayed in, we played cards or chess or just watched TV. I really enjoyed the time I spent with Toni. Gary started to become suspicious that there was something going on between us because we were having such a good time. But, we were at most flirting and basically just being friends. I had come to like her quite a lot in spite of living in a battle zone.

One evening, Gary tried about ten times to convince me to go out to the bars with him. I had to be at the pilot plant at 6 AM and I wasn't about to go out. Finally, Gary left. I heard his sports car putter off. Toni and I started to play chess. About move twelve, Gary loomed suddenly in the doorway. Toni let out a half scream. She was not expecting anyone to suddenly appear in the living room. Gary mumbled something about forgetting his wallet, went to his room, and then left

for the second time. It was only after he puttered off the second time that we realized that in order for him to surprise us like that, he must have turned off the lights of his car and coasted into the driveway. Otherwise we would have seen the lights and heard the engine of his car before his sudden appearance in the doorway. He had been trying to catch us in the act. That was enough for Toni. She found her own place in Manhattan the next week and moved out. I really missed her, but at least Gary returned to semi-normal.

Four months later, Toni was engaged to a multi-millionaire from Haiti. His parents owned sugar plantations, but they were going to live in Monte Carlo. Toni ended up running her own charitable foundation to save or preserve something. The last Christmas card I got from her was postmarked from Tahiti.

Besides precisely tuning his sports car and trying to meet women, there was one activity that Gary liked and that was bowling. I like bowling too, but in a lot of moderation. Gary would bowl all year long. I would rather play almost any sport other than bowling, and I do so in the spring, summer and fall. But in the winter, I have never been able to generate any enthusiasm for sports like downhill skiing or ice-skating. It's too cold, I'm no good at it, you can hurt yourself badly, it's expensive and it's boring because there is no ball. I need a ball to trick me into exercise. So, in the winter, every Sunday morning Gary and I would go bowling at the Strike and Spare on Rt. 22. We would bowl from 8 AM. To 10 AM. It was open bowling for a fixed price at that time of the morning. You could rent a lane by the hour, paying the same price whether you bowled one game or fifteen games.

Gary was a very good bowler, usually scoring over 200. So from a competition standpoint, Gary gave you all you could ask for. The trouble was it came at slow speed. If I had been by myself, I probably could have bowled six games every hour that I had a lane. Gary was so deliberate that we were lucky to finish a total of four games in an hour. It's not like a bowling alley is a stimulating place to spend time when you are not bowling. Going with Gary, I spent a lot of time not bowling.

I finally hit on a strategy to make the time bearable. Gary only agreed to this after I threatened to stop going with him. I would bowl 5 straight frames. Gary would then bowl I0 straight frames and I would use the time to have breakfast, read the Sunday paper, and make phone calls, or perhaps all three. I would then bowl my last 5 frames and we would see who won and adjust the match accordingly.

One particular Sunday morning, we left the bowling alley at 10 AM and Gary was starving: Absolutely famished. He decided to stop for a pizza. I told him not to worry about me. I couldn't look a pizza in the face at 10 AM. We stopped at a normally popular pizza place on Rt. 22. It was not so popular at that hour on a Sunday morning in February.

The door to the place was open, but all the chairs were set upside down on the tables. A staff of three was behind the counter preparing the kitchen for the day ahead. We were the only customers.

As you walked in, a sign in big letters immediately got your attention. The sign said: PLEASE WAIT PATIENTLY UNTIL YOUR NUMBER IS CALLED. The sign was right over the cash register where you placed and picked up your takeout orders. Gary walked over to the cash register where a young man glanced up quickly with a startled look on his face. He was not expecting a customer for at least another hour and a half. Gary said he wanted a large pie to go (pepperoni and mushrooms, as I recall). The young man wrote this down and asked Gary if he wanted to order anything else. Gary said no. The young man asked for \$8.00 and Gary paid him. Then there was a silence as Gary remained in front of the cash register with an expectant look on his face.

The young man gradually became more and more unsettled. He looked down at his pad and repeated the order to Gary. Gary confirmed the order. The young man said, "It will be at least 20 minutes." Gary said that was fine and stood there staring at the young man. The young man said, "Is there anything else?"

Gary pointed up to the sign above his head. The young man smiled. "Oh, you don't need a number. We only use numbers when it gets crowded."

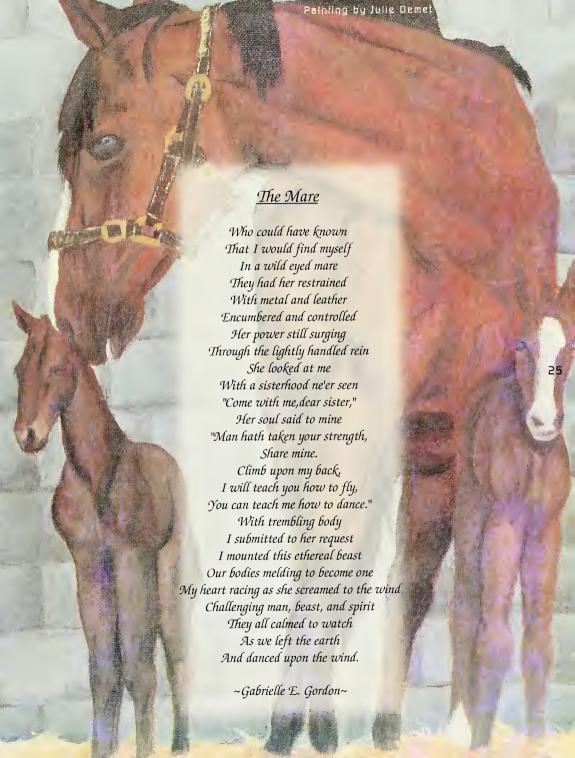
Gary stood his ground. "The sign says I need a number." You have to remember that Gary is an engineer who actually reads all the technical manuals and instructions before trying out a new piece of equipment.

The young man sighed, started to say something and then thought better of it. He said, "You want a number? OK, I'll give you a number. Your number is one."

Gary happily went to sit down on the bench next to the door. Twenty minutes later the young man appeared back at the cash register with a white pizza box in his hands. He raised the box slightly and nodded in Gary's direction and said, "OK."

Gary didn't move. The young man looked at him for a couple seconds, sighed and then said, "Number one." Gary got up and got his pizza. Then we drove back to the house.

I haven't heard from Gary in over five years, but I often think of him while I'm in line at the deli with a number in my hand. It helps me to wait patiently. Gary could be frustrating to deal with at times, but there was a lot about him to respect. He was really good at his job and he worked hard at it. He was absolutely reliable; if he said he would do something, he did it. He had the discipline to live life by rules and to read all the directions along the way. He respected authority and order. He had his fling at life in a faster lane and decided to move back over to the right. He married a girl who was an IRS auditor. They would sit for hours together at home watching their fish tanks. Their kids were rather quiet and introspective. With the exception of those two years with Toni, it has been a calm, orderly, satisfying and largely horizontal life for him.



It's Not Easy Being Me

It's not easy being me...
I've got a hundred different things
That all should have been done.
It's not easy being me

I make by bed and brush my teeth I do the laundry and the cookin' I feed the cows and bale hay. It's not easy being me...

I do the grocery shopping. I run your little errands. I play your little games. It's not easy being me...

I only ask for a vacation. A few days to relax. If I could only get away-I would realize for once It's not easy being me...

It's not easy being me...
I've got a hundred different things
That all should have been done
It's not easy being me...

I'm coming to my grips Realizing problems I have caused I only wish they could be solved It's not easy being me...

I wish upon a star
To think it might come true
When all I get is disappointment.
It's not easy being me...

I'm just lucky to have known The one who saved my life He died for you and me But did he ever tell you It's not easy being me...

I struggle with today, Hard to forget yesterday Tomorrow's bound to come It's not easy being me...

It's not easy being me...
I've got a hundred different things
That all should have been done
It's not easy being me...

I'm waiting for tomorrow To see what will come true 'Cause every now and then It's not easy being me...

Hoping things might turn around That the best is yet to come 'Cause right now I'm realizing It's not easy being me...

It's not easy being me...
I've got a hundred different things
That all should have been done.
It's not easy being me.

-Jillayne Davis

THE JOY OF FALLING

Forever Falling
It just won't stop
I wait to hit rock bottom
Always looking up

The ceiling climbs higher
The ledge far away
There's no safety in this
I have gone astray

FALLING LIKE A STONE
MY DESCENT FROM ABOVE
REELING AND SPINNING
'STEAD OF FLYING LIKE THE
DOVE

I CANNOT BELIEVE
THAT MY WINGS HAVE BEEN
CLIPPED
MY SOUL SET FREE

My soul set free Whilst from my body they ripped

GOD SMILED AS IT HAPPENED
JOY IN HIS PROUD FACE
THIS ANGEL HAS FALLEN
BUT NOT FROM HIS GRACE

HUMAN AM I
LIKE ALL HUMANS ARE
IMPERFECT AND BLEMISHED
YET ALL MY CARES ARE FAR

FOR I FALL FROM MY FATHER
FOR ONE REASON ALONE
THE ONLY WAY TO STAY
WAS TO HAVE A HEART MADE
OF STONE

To not fall in Love
Was a chore not for me
I fell with a smile
And a heart soon set free

Gabrielle E. Gordon



Blend of Photos by Vicci Valenti



Morningsong

There is a breeze caressing,

A hyacinth-scented air

That wasts o'er the trees newly budding

And gently lifts my hair.

There is a sky so delphine,

So waxy smooth and clear,

And a mackingbird witnessing

In canticles joyous,

Th! Spring's exuberantly here!

~Dr. Karen Schramm

photos by Larissa Keister



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by Andrea Velas



I MISS YOU LOVE

I miss you Missing you like kissing you Never dissing you Glistening you love Not dismissing you love Like crazy crazy love like not being lazy love Amazing love Love craving love Caught up in a daze love Hazy love, that crazy love Slow love Nice flow love Never let you go love No means no love Yes is Yes love Good love, Moody love Maybe I should love Think I would love Boyz 'N' the Hood love Home Alone love Two Doves love Love Jones love That love Fast love Never was my past love Break-fast love Make it last love Forever love, Together love Never say never love Oh love Music love Musia Soulchild's Love Non-confusing love No abusing love Never losing love Gooey love, choosy love Do me love Chewy love, ooh wee love Missing you love I miss you love

30

Ahnjel Weaver

Love.



LOOKING FROM THE OUTSIDE I WANDER THROUGH THE STORM WATCHING STILL YOU LEAVE ME

DARKNESS ON THE INSIDE
I CANNOT FIGHT IT FREE
SEEING
YET BLINDED BY MY ANGUISH

ONLY ONCE
BEFORE THE RAIN BEGAN TO
FALL
WAS THERE SUN

CLOUDS OF DESPAIR
HIDE THE HEALING LIGHT
SHADING THAT WHICH NEEDED
TO BE SEEN

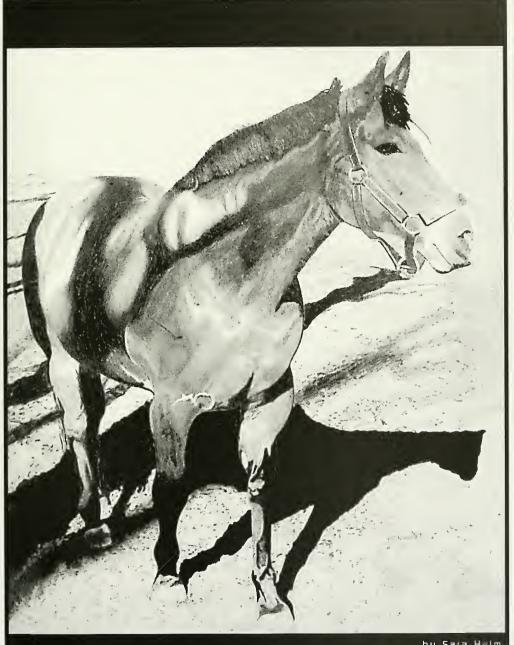
DROWNING DEEPLY
INTO THE SHADOWS
DARK CAVES OF LONELY SORROW
CONCEALING, SUFFOCATING

THE SUN HAS SET NIGHT HAS COME

LOST, ALONE, FOREVER TIME ERASES PAIN NO PEOPLE ERASE THINGS

STILL AWAY ON THE INSIDE I NEVER WILL FORGET THINKING WHEN WE'LL BE TOGETHER

AMY SIEBERT



by Sara Helm



The Clog

David Molettiere
Based on actual events

Nothing alleviates boredom like a mission. A mission that has never been undertaken; a journey where the outcome and destination are not certain. I was bored. I needed a mission. I walked lackadaisically into my kitchen. I paused, staring in extreme fascination at the sudsy bluish-green water lying dead still in my kitchen sink. I looked a little to the right and up and was momentarily perplexed. The drain stopper was right where it shouldn't have been, right next to the spray thing. It should have been in the drain, with the water not draining and all.

Could it be? Was my adventure, my mission, my journey into parts unknown waiting? Behold, I was blessed. I had a clogged kitchen sink. At the time, I assumed that this would turn out to be just your average clog. I was wrong. This one was hearty. Of course I plunged, as any self-respecting man would have done, but try as I might, the mighty clog held.

The next logical step in any plumbing malady would be to pour something toxic down the drain. I found a powder of unknown origin and expiration tucked deep in a recess beneath the sink. I shook the entire contents of this rusty cylinder and let the crystals of hope flow deep into the waters of the damned. Nothing, but for some really cool bubbles. I called my roommate at work and told him to pick up more toxic stuff on his way home from work; he agreed. I then read the label of what I had just poured down the drain. It warned me, the consumer of sorts, not to mix products and only to attempt clearing the drain by the toxic route once. This only served to excite me. I mean, why warn me? Would something really volatile happen if I blatantly disregarded their warning? Would there be a Chernobyl type of reaction if in a blinding flash of insanity I threw caution to the wind? Unfortunately not. I'm sure that some namby pamby tight-ass of a corporate attorney insisted on the safety clause because he was afraid of a multi-million dollar law suit for wrongful death. Gimme a break.

Joe arrives in the waning hours of the day; at around hour seven of having a clogged kitchen sink. He has a bottle of liquid drain cleaner! I thought it only came in crystal form! I was energized. Not only was I going to mix chemicals, I was going to mix mediums! Surely there was a Nobel Prize in order, or a Purple Heart or something. I dutifully searched the label for more warnings and cautions. Paydirt. Same one as before, plus another. The 'not to exceed' level was one third of the bottle. I already knew that I was not dealing with your ordinary run of the mill hairball; I was speculating on something big in the pipe, something like a whole mouse. I knew, as God is my witness, that I needed to use the entire strength of what I ever so gingerly cradled in my hands. Unbeknownst to Joe, I intended on using the whole bottle.

Slowly, I turned to face my roommate and friend, maybe for the last time. I told him what my intentions were, not to stop me, and that it was something I had to do. I'm sure he could see in my eyes that there was no sense in arguing. I'm sure he could also see the fear and maybe even smell it, for I had inadvertently lost control of my bowels. After a change of shorts, off came the top of the bottle; we were on our way to victory! Joe had volunteered to hold the designated blast shield, a see-thru acrylic cookbook holder, in front of my eyes so that

I could have both hands free to work, God bless him. The toxic goo cascaded forth from the neck of the plastic jug that I held firmly in my trembling hands. Down it arced, piercing the surface of the already stagnating water like an Olympic diver on her way to the gold. I could almost sense its purpose as it moved effortlessly through the six inches of water and into the pipe where its toxic brother and the clog awaited. Vengeance is mine.

Beads of sweat popped out along my brow as both Joe and I waited. We were too enraptured to move as a stream of bubbles and other pipe crap spewed forth from the drain. A dog howled somewhere in the distance. I felt a heat on my legs and was momentarily embarrassed; I thought maybe, in all the excitement, I had let my bladder go. On further inspection, the source of the heat was found. It was the pipe! The heat was evidence of the chemical reaction taking place within! The pipe was actually too hot to touch. We returned our gaze to the sink, only to find that all activity around the gaping maw of the drain had stopped. We had failed. We had succeeded only in bringing forth some more wretched green, slick pipe crap that now floated lazily on top of the water. The bottom of the sink was obscured from view. My knees buckled under the full weight of my failure. Minutes, no, hours of anticipation and expectation weighed heavily on my shoulders and my brow, for I and my roommate had failed. Depression lazily set her icy hand upon us.

Like a slap of recognition, a lightning bolt of realization, a light bulb over my head, I realized what now had to be done. Was a man always so reliant on the niceties and convenience of modern inventions (i.e. drain clearing fluid)? "No," I roared, much to the surprise of Joe. Man battled his way from the primordial soup with nothing but his bare knuckles (or some prehistoric origin of a knuckle) leading the way. I now was calling upon instinct, raw, pure, powerful instinct, to deliver this clog from my drain. I raced past Joe, momentarily losing much-needed traction on the slick kitchen floor. Up, up, up the stairs I climbed, hurdling not one but two dogs like a possessed O.J. Simpson. Beads of perspiration dripped from my creased brow, stinging my unblinking eye. Suddenly I found myself standing, shivering in front of my closet door, holding in my hand the implement that would deliver me, us, the clog. A wire coat hanger.

The wire coat hanger can be used in a myriad of ways, as I am sure many of you have found. I am also sure that some of you have even attempted what I shall now describe. It's really exhilarating when you feel you are being innovative. We stood there for quite a while trying to decide the best way to snake the now untwisted, straightened coat hanger down the drain to tickle the backside of the offending mouse/clog. It quickly became apparent that the hanger, even in its elongated state, did not have sufficient length to go from the sink drain to where we thought the clog lay. We would have to dismantle the piping that lay in that as yet uncharted realm of plumbing hell, the place where families for generation upon generation have stored their most toxic of chemicals... that dark, brooding cavity beneath the sink.

Lady Luck was at our side for this leg of the journey. The pipe, up to where it takes that wicked hairpin turn known as 'the trap,' was loose and really quite easy to dismantle. In our glee at finding such ease, we had forgotten that there was a foot of standing drain effluent/water mixture in the sink. With a final heave, we managed to pull the piping loose from its moorings and in the process release a torrent of the putrefied sink cocktail on the floor and all over our laps. I had my head turned at the moment of impact, as the sheer force that I had exerted in yanking on the pipe had caused my head to whip back and forth from the exertion. My head

was in the forth position when the sludge hit. It hit Joe first!

"Daaaaaaaavvvvvvvvveeeeeeeee!!! Ahhhhh, it burns, it burns!" My head was just coming back to center when simultaneously my world was rocked by the screams of my roommate, screams that will ring in my head for eternity, and the shock of the muck soaking my jeans. In instinctively knew that I could not be of any help to Joe if I too was rolling around in blinding pain. I quickly stripped off my Levi jeans and turned to help the poor bastard I called my buddy. Wearing only socks, a T-shirt, and heart-patterned glow-in-the-dark boxer shorts, I set to work dousing the smoldering, moaning, human mass on the kitchen floor with water and baking soda. Thankfully, within seconds, he was fine. We stood together, wearing pretty much the same style of ridiculous attire, laughing, crying and bonding. Our two dogs just sat there and looked at us as dogs often do, with that slight tilt to the head and one ear cocked.

From a tactical point of view, we had successfully concluded the pipe removal and could now set to work with the wire hanger. Luckily, Joan Crawford is not my mother or we would not have had any wire hangers in the house. Partially clothed and half crazed, we crouched side by side amongst the piping debris that littered the floor. The juices that had poured out from the pipe had now flowed to a lower part of the kitchen and had soaked into the sub-floor. I started to wonder what the half-life of toxic sink fluid was. Under my watchful eye, Joe was snaking the post-coat hanger device into the orifice of the pipe elbow. Time and time again my feeble roommate was confounded by the alarming angle of the elbow. The metal rod just couldn't, wouldn't make the turn. Fingers pruned and knuckles bleeding, his shoulders slumped in dejection; Joe had been beaten. A valiant effort, but my faith in Joe and his exhaustive efforts convinced me to let lie his handiwork. I would not attempt what he could not do! We stood together unspeaking for what seemed like hours. Periodically, he or I would throw out suggestions on how to beat the clog.

"Dynamite?"

"I don't know where to buy the stuff."

"We could hook up the vacuum cleaner and..."

"Not enough horsepower."

"We could start a little fire and kind of cook the clog down."

"We rent."

"Oh, yeah."

"I guess that means..."

"Yup."

Neither of us could bring ourselves to actually breathe the word. All our attempts had ended in failure. We had done everything humanly and inhumanly possible. We just did not possess the skill and the equipment. Damn the clog! Damn it to hell!

It was time to call...plumber.

The realization of this reality was dumbfounding. This is equal to asking directions. A man does not ask directions and he does not call a plumber. It is just not done. I told Joe not to worry, he could save face. I would place the call. He did not thank me. He did not have to. I was making the ultimate sacrifice. I was taking a bullet for him and I could sense his gratitude. I told him to take a load off. He had done good. I would re-assemble the pipe beneath the sink, thus giving the plumber a fresh slate from which to conjure his black magic. The

whole process of re-assembly was simple. Throw the pipe up there, spin the nut. Bing, bang, boom. Damn it, I could have fixed this cockamamie contraption...if I had the right tools!

Hours turned into days. The days into weeks. I just couldn't bring myself to make the call. Needless to say, dishes piled up, things started to grow, and our olfactory senses (smell) began to be assaulted. Something had to be done. Back to work I went: I hauled out my ice chest. Thirty-two gallons of capacity that I placed next to the sink. This would allow me to do several loads of dishes while simultaneously siphoning the sink water into the cooler. It would then be a simple matter to carry the cooler outside and dump it. The siphoning of the freshly filthy sink water was a bothersome task. I first needed to find a length of hose or flexible tubing with a sufficient inner diameter to allow the passage of food stuffs. Carrot ends, soggy lettuce leaves, half chewed pieces of gristle. The vacuum cleaner hose was perfect, almost. To siphon, one must first cause the hose to be filled with liquid. I knew I had to manipulate the hose as if it were a straw. On bended knee, I attempted to stretch my mouth wide enough to form a cohesive seal around the end of this large hose. Barely, and with a considerable amount of pain and embarrassment, I succeeded.

Now the problem was the actual art of inhaling. Try it. Open our mouth as wide as possible and try to inhale a substantial breath. Not easy, is it? With a mighty effort, I sucked. My eyes rolled back in my head, turning me into some hideous, kneeling ghost. Just as I thought victory was mine, the water receded. Again, I must try! This time I put my whole body into it. Bent like an as yet unreleased bow, I uncoiled. Using my body's momentum to expand my lungs like a dog's bark, I sucked. I had not anticipated that my inhalation would be so tremendous. First dust, then hairballs from the previous week's vacuuming flew into my mouth, adhering themselves to my tonsils (or whatever that dangling thing in the back of your throat is). This adherence was only temporary, though, as the great flood of soapy, filthy dish water rushed in behind the dust. My eyes flew open wide, the retching started somewhere near my toes. This was a bad idea. The kitchen swam as my vision was blurred. Wait 'til I tell Joe, he'll love this one! After a short rest, all the while staring at the now murky waters in my toilet, I returned downstairs to commence the much simpler task of ladling the water from the sink to the cooler. I kept up this cycle of doing dishes and ladling until the cooler was full. After one more load of dishes the sink too was full. Now I had a cooler filled with thirty two gallons of filth, a sink with the same, and a plethora of yet unwashed dishes. This would not have been a problem if I could have lifted the cooler. No way! It was tremendously heavy; I doubted that even Joe and myself could budge it. With all that had already transpired and all that I envisioned before me, I knew I must now call the plumber.

Selective amnesia is a curious phenomenon. The only time that I would remember to place the call would be in the evenings. Then all the places where the trade of plumbing is housed would be closed, the proprietor having gone home. I had the option of declaring my plumbing malady a disaster and thus have the plumber come out in the evening, but it would have cost extra. So on it went this way, day after day, the stew of toxins and rotting animal and vegetable matter steeping in both the sink and the cooler. These cauldrons of infestation, like the primordial soup, had their own miniature environment that supported a plethora of life. Swarms of tiny flying gnats beat their unseen wings to hover silently in the pungent, acrid air

over my sink. A blanket of gray to green flora grew on the surface of what was once my counter-top. We had to do something before my kitchen was declared a wildlife sanctuary by the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, thus denying me any hope of a return to kitchen past. I must have been there for two hours just standing, staring at the cordless phone in my hand. I had already thumbed through the yellow pages to the plumber section and had picked one in my area. All that I had to do now was place the call. Suddenly, and seemingly without my consent, my right hand began pushing the right sequences of numbers to connect me to the licensed, master plumber of my choice. There was no turning back now.

"Hullo?"

Her voice was deep and throaty. Her phone manner abrupt...

"Uh, yeah. I, uh, seem to have a stopped up kitchen sink."

"So?"

...and callous.

"Can you get someone to come out and, uh, fix it?"

"Yeah, Manny will be over in the morning. Where do you live, we only take cash!"

I did not know how those two thoughts were linked and I didn't ask. I gave her my address.

"About how much will this cost?"

"I dunno. Manny will know."

"Uh, okay. Tomorrow, then, bye."

There was no closing statement on her part, no nothing. A click, then a dead line. Pretty strange. I was exhausted from the conversation. It symbolized the finality of my defeat. I would never be able to be a handyman, fixer-upper, or any other such names describing a guy who fixes things. I obviously did not have the knack. My bed awaited me. Sleep claimed me. Finally, I could be lost in my dreams...

I was startled awake, ironically the night before the plumber was to arrive, by an inhuman cry that emanated from the kitchen and echoed down the hall. "Alive, alive," Joe screamed, "Alive, it's living, dammit!" There was my roommate, peering into the murky stagnation of the sink. The stench I encountered upon crossing the threshold into the kitchen was oppressive yet sickly sweet, and, dare I say, mesmerizing. He turned to me with eyes glazed, the tendons in his neck stretched like harp strings, and whispered, "Can you see it? Tell me you can see it." As God is my witness, I did see it. The flora covering the counter was rising and falling. Heaving as if breathing of its own accord. It was alive. Suddenly I felt a cool waft of air upon my damp brow. As suddenly as I had seen the fluxing apparition, it vanished. The human mind is a funny thing, so delicate yet so powerful. The air in the kitchen had been altered by the ecosphere of the sink. It now possessed hallucinogenic properties. The breeze from the partially open window had been enough, just enough, to clear my senses, if only for a brief moment. A moment of which I took precious advantage.

I pulled Joe with my left hand towards the open doorway while simultaneously slamming the window open, the force shattering two of the four panes and splintering the jam. A small price to pay to fool sure insanity. I helped Joe back to bed. I then returned downstairs to the lair of the pungent air and opened all the windows in the vicinity of the kitchen. It was not obvious to me that the toxic recipe in the sink and cooler had reached cataclysmic proportions.

How fortuitous we were that the plumber was scheduled to arrive at daybreak. I knew I could not pass the remainder of the night in slumber so I flipped on the television and waited out the darkness watching the original Blob movie. I dozed off right about when the poor lad who was getting a hair cut got his head sucked down the drain by that interminable blob.

I was jarred again out of sleep, by nothing that I could put my finger on. Then it hit me like an ice cold slap in the face; there was no sound, only a deafening silence. The birds had stopped singing, the leaves were not rustling, and there was no sound of traffic. It was as if a huge sound vacuum had been created, its powerful negative pressure sucking in all noise, all noise except my heart hammering in my chest and the slight squeak of well-worn brake pads being applied. I had to stand on tip toe to look out one of the two small windows mounted high on my front door. What I saw was immediately burned into my memory. I began to wish that Joe was home to offer me moral support, and two more fists should they be needed. A hulking man of questionable ancestry and lineage was easing his tremendous frame from the driver's seat of a large Ford Econoline utility van. "Plumber" was all it said in white, chipped lettering painted on a sun-bleached blue background. The plumber-beast made his way around to the back and swung open the giant rear door. It reminded me for an instant of a hearse. He withdrew from the cavernous interior the largest homemade drain snake imaginable. There was no power cord visible, which made me curious. What he then extracted explained the lack of a cord. A five gallon metal canister marked "diesel fuel." He palmed the can like a basketball, his thick fingers grasping the dented rusted metal. In the other hand, he effortlessly swung the giant snake machine. That was all he carried as he made his way towards my front door. It was upon entering the door to allow the behemoth to enter that I noticed his attire. He wore Herman Survivor work-boots that were so worn that the steel toe was showing through the leather of the right boot. The boots, predominantly the right, were stained with a reddish, rust-colored substance. The color of dried blood, I supposed. He wore jet blue Lee jeans. They were so brand new that the white stitching was a striking contrast to the stiff blue material. Tucked ever so gently into the waist of his Lee's was a beeper. His thread-bare tank top was stretched over a chest large enough to land a Cessna on. The material was so thin, I could make out his mattress of black chest hair. He wore nothing on his head except for what nature had given him. Thick, unruly, black locks combed in no particular fashion. I stared. In my estimation, this man had killed before. Would he kill again? 1 trembled.

"You gotta problem?"

Good God! What had I done to raise the temper of this giant? He must then have noticed my fear, for he leant down, his body bent at the waist at nearly a ninety degree angle, in order to be face to face with me.

"You okay, men? I'm here fo' da sink."

Relief and color flooded back into my face. I got it! The problem was the sink, the sink was the problem! An audible giggle trickled through my dry lips.

"Yeah, right. Right this way, right this way!" I stammered as I ushered him in.

His shoulders almost brushed the hallway walls as he swaggered with his deadly load towards the kitchen. This isn't so bad, I thought. I am not inadequate. This man is at my beck and call, an extension of me. He is the implement, the tool if you will, that I have chosen with which to do battle with the clog. I was, for a moment, a commander of one troop.

"Hey man, I just got beeped. You gotta phone, it's probly my old lady."

"Uh sure, it's cordless," who cares, I thought, "just push the 'TALK' button."

"What?"

"The 'TALK' button, right there," I pointed.

"Uh, cool, sure man, sure."

He allowed the weight of his massive frame to rest up against the refrigerator. I hummed quietly, 'Eye of the Tiger' from that Rocky movie and stared at the ceiling. He was right. It was his wife, God save her.

"Yeah, what," quite a salutation, "I'm on the job, why you calling me...yeah...man...that piece of chit...no way, the car does not need no new oil pan...wha...gimme his numba, I'll call him...yeah!"

He hung up. He started to dial again, furiously. He turned to me.

"It's ringing, man."

So what!? Who does this guy think he is, anyway? He should be doing that plumbing thing. Why I should, I should...

"I should push this piece of chit's face in," the plumber-beast said to no one in particular.

...keep my mouth shut. I assumed that he was placing a call to consult with this mechanic on a particular automotive problem. The oil pan, I presumed. It could be that this guy was angry because he could not fix his car himself. He may feel as inadequate as I had. He was not alone. I thought about hugging this big, hulking, strapping man and telling him that everything would be okay. Needless to say, I refrained. I was lost in my thoughts and so did not catch his conversation with his mechanic. He seemed to have calmed down, though, and that definitely fell into the 'good' category.

He hung up and put the phone in the dish drying rack, of course. He said that he would have to take apart the pipe up to the trap in order to snake it. Fine. Without tools or aid of any mechanical implement, he dismantled the piping. I stared in deep fascination as he lay on his back, head in the forbidden cavern beneath the sink, as he worked his trade with his callous, gnarled hands. I was too enthralled to be of any help. Too focused to remember that the sink still contained its hideous broth, a broth that would momentarily cascade onto his prison-hardened face. Just as this realization struck me, the torrent let loose.

"Eie, madre de Dios!"

"Buddy, you okay?"

Was I liable, I wondered, in this litigious-happy judicial environment? Would I have to pay reparations to his wife? Community service? Club Fed with Charles Manson?

"Joder!"

I believe that is Spanish slang, the everyday street speech describing the act of sex.

"Sorry, man, no problem."

Sorry? No problem? I had been granted clemency by the Governor. Now that my worries were over, I noticed the smell. It had been bad enough when the waters were still, but now, now that they had been agitated, to quote the plumber...Madre de Dios, Mother of God. Luckily, the windows were still open from the night before and the smell soon dissipated.

I gave Manny a paper towel to dry off his face. Some of the water had been absorbed by his sponge-like chest hair, the remainder pooled lazily on the floor. I thought about asking him what was next on this whirl-wind tour of the realm of the master plumber, but thought

better of it when I saw him advance towards his snake contraption. He bent low and spun off the cap to what I can only guess was the gas tank. Or diesel in this case. He reached over to the tank of fuel he had brought with him and gave it a forceful squeeze. The top bulged as the inner air pressure increased; with an audible 'pop' the cap flew off and landed on the other side of the kitchen. Why on earth would be have a diesel powered model? Surely, electricity would be less of an indoor pollutant. Again I thought better of asking. Maybe he would implement some sort of hose, as I had, but to direct the noxious gases outside. He filled the tank on the machine, all the while being careful to spill as much as possible of the dark flammable liquid on my linoleum floor. Swell! With the entire contents of the vessel either in the machine or on the floor, he unthinkingly discarded the fuel canister in the now empty sink. With what would have been a monumental effort for me, he effortlessly pulled the rip cord and the unmuffled engine roared to life; the staccato burst of the oscillating twin cylinders sounded like gunfire in an echo chamber. Black diesel smoke boiled forth from the belly of the machine. The smoke caught in the draft from the open windows and swirled madly in the cross current. I ran, my vision partially obscured by the noxious fumes. I had to clear the air. As Joe was a products manager for seasonal products, there were fans, humidifiers, and heaters everywhere. I grabbed a powerful Comfort Edge Air stand fan, positioned it, and quickly plugged it in. In moments it was spinning silently, effortlessly clearing the brooding fumes from the kitchen. Manny mouthed silent words to me. I responded with a smile, a nod of the head, and a 'go ahead' gesture with my right hand. Who was I to stand in the way of a genius? With my half-assed blessing, he set to work.

A snake machine is really a simple device. There is an engine, usually electrical in nature, and a cone-shaped spinning contraption that houses umpteen feet of fairly thick cable. This cable, specifically the very end, is where the clog business is conducted. Attached to the end is a claw of sorts that had been designed and redesigned over the ages by master plumbers and engineers. This claw serves the purpose of spinning round and round as the cable is dispensed from the spinning contraption. Once the spinning claw meets the clog, voila, the clog loses. So, Manny started to pull on the claw thing and feed it into the mouth of the trap. He pushed and pushed, but the cable was not feeding from the spinning contraption down into the pipe as it is supposed to do. He shifted his position so now his back is all I could see; it was twisting and heaving in all directions. I could see his sweat as they formed little Mississippi, Nile, and Amazon rivers on the back of his great neck. The tone of the machine suddenly changed from the gunfire rattle of before to a higher pitched whine. I moved around to see what was happening just in time to see that he had downshifted into a lower gear! This was unbelievable-these things are supposed to be one speed and one speed only. Gears? Get outta town! Suddenly and without warning, the rattle and hum of the machine ceased. The silence punctuated by nothing. I popped my ears by stretching my jaws wide and shook my head to ward off dizziness caused by the still lingering exhaust emissions.

"Hey!"

He was yelling because he was still partially deaf from being so close to the source of the sound.

"I gotta chop da trap off. Okay, man?"

"Take it to town, baby!" I was still a little giddy from the downshift. He got up from his crouch and moved towards the front door. I assumed that he was going out to his truck to

get a hacksaw to amputate the trap. He returned momentarily with an eighty cubic inch tank of acetylene welding gas and a burn-scarred face shield. He handed me the shield.

"What are you going to use?" I asked.

"Hey, man, I'm a pro. I just squint."

"But...never mind."

I put the shield on and was immediately immersed in total darkness. I heard fumbling, then the sound of a box of matches being slid open. It is amazing that once one of the senses has been lost, the others take over and compensate. My hearing was incredible. I peeked from behind the mask as Manny struck the match against the toe of his boot. The exposed, rough metal of the steel-toe did its job as the match leapt into flame. I hurriedly protected my eyes from the impending glare of the white hot gas flame. Whoosh! The small black glass plate directly in front of my eyes lit up in a flash. I could look directly at the burning mass of flame and watched as Manny, my plumber extraordinaire, adjusted the gas until only a pinpoint of white hot destruction blazed forth from the nozzle. Sure enough, he was squinting. Again, he worked with his back to me. Through the shield I could just make out the silhouette of his back, framed by an unearthly glow coming from the tool. Within seconds, he was done.

"Okay, man. I done."

I removed the blast shield just as I heard the gas sputter off.

"Uh, Manny, your pants are on fire!"

The cuff of his jeans was not actually in flame, it was just glowing and smoking.

"Aw, man, my wife, man, she gonna kill me. Brand new, man, from K-Mart."

Sorry bud, perils of the trade. Better your pants leg than my house. He promptly forgot his trousers and began to spit furiously on the steaming end of the pipe where the trap used to lie. Gross, but effective in dissipating the heat. With that done, he again set to work with his homespun snake machine. Braaaaap, the machine leapt to life. Manny was starting to work at a fever pitch. The fan was still spinning madly, doing the job it was intended for-keeping the flow of oxygen to Manny's few remaining brain cells free of much of the carbon monoxide spewing from his contraption. He had placed the machine on the kitchen floor and was keeping its gyrations to a minimum by placing his right foot on top and bearing down with much of his weight. He was using both hands to pull lengths and lengths of cable from the spinning attachment while simultaneously feeding this cable into the ragged, burned end of the pipe. Countless feet, no, yards of cable disappeared into the plumbing depths all the while being led by the ominous spinning claw.

"Manny, how's it going?"

Nothing.

"Hey, Manny!"

Zilch. Oh well. The engine started to slow down and labor underneath some tremendous load. It had found the clog! It was amazing to think that this knot of something that had been the undoing of my existence for a long time was now summarily being decimated. Yards and yards from where Manny and I stood lay the clog. In some subterranean nook, dark and wet, it was existing in its last moments. Rings of black smoke were pulsing from the machine with every arduous pump of the cylinders; the cable was rattling in the pipes as it spun and convulsed. On one end a powerful diesel motor was forcing the cable to turn; on the other end a clog of titanic proportions was fighting for its life. The cable held fast, the opposite of an

umbilical cord, not bringing life and sustaining it, but squashing out 'life' as the clog knew it. With a final sputter and belch, the machine was quiet, its twin cylinders having heated to the point of seizing within its valiant casing. "Chit." That one word uttered by my harrowed plumber sent chills racing up and down my spine. Did the clog beat the machine? Was I now doomed to share my life with the clog? These questions were answered when Manny turned to me and my worries went down the soon-to-be cleared drain. Manny was grinning. He looked like an imbecile, but he was grinning.

"We got it, man."

Before I could pat him on the back or offer to replace his drain clearing device, he whipped back around and began hauling on the cable, extracting inch by painful inch from the pipe. At the other end lay the clog. Soon I would meet my adversary face to 'face.' For what seemed like hours he pulled and pulled the twisted, wet, filthy cable spooled in twisting arcs all over my kitchen floor. He stopped, took a breath, and with one giant, climactic last heave, the claw with its disgusting objective attached was swinging in plain sight. Out of its realm and into mine, the clog was delivered. I doubled over as my stomach turned. Only with a monumental effort did I keep from adding to the cacophony of items and liquids that littered my kitchen floor. This clog, this thing, this...this...thing that I held in raptured gaze was not of this earth. It was hairy, that I was sure of. The coloring was blue-blue and black. It changed from its greatest in mass right where the claw held it and tapered down to a point eight inches away. Of its weight I will never know for I refused to hold it, even by the cable. It was about the size of a tennis ball at the top, yet not fully spherical. It dripped water, water from the deepest reaches of the plumbing and it oozed a thicker, more gummy liquid that made a loud plopping noise as it hit the floor.

"Good God, man! What is it?"

"Hey man, I saw des befoe but neva dis big.'

"Well?"

"It's hair, man, a hair ball."

A hair ball? Like something that a cat would cough up? But it's blue. Blue?! Blue? Blue! The old lady in the adjoining apartment has blue hair! Had she invaded the sanctity of my own home? Worse yet, had she washed her aged decrepit head of thinning blue hair in my kitchen sink? Ugh! I was bordering on hysteria. I mean, she seemed so loving, surely she was not a master at picking locks! Surely not.

"Man? You hear me?"

"Uh...no." He must have been trying to tell me something. "What were you saying?" "I said I seen dis befoe. You must share a pipe wid da sink nex doe. Happen all da time, man."

Phew. Jeeze Louise, she must have had a clogged sink too! She was looney! She had a clogged sink for months and she never called a plumber. She must be senile. I made a mental note to send her half the bill. Better yet, tell her the bill was twice the amount it actually was, thus having her sport payment for the whole enchilada. Maybe even make a profit?

"Hey, Manny." He was beginning to pack up. He had already made short work of reassembling the piping. "How much will this cost?" What had he done with the clog, I started to wonder.

"Forty."

Screw it. I decided to pay the whole nut. I was ecstatic anyway. I had my sink back; I decided to throw caution to the wind and slapped the monstrous plumber on the back.

"Good job, pal. Nice work."

Nuts! He slowly straightened up to his full height. He sighted down a nose broken more than once and his lips began to curl at both ends. What had I come so far for? To be squashed like an insect?

"Tanks man, tanks a lot."

He resumed packing; I excused myself to change my underwear. When I came back downstairs, a bit fresher and with a slight spring in my step, Manny was packed and ready. The floor of my kitchen still resembled a bayou, littered with different throw-away plumbing knick-knacks. It would be a while before my kitchen was back to normal. I paid him with two twenties, crisp and fresh, having been recently harvested from the ATM machine. I also quickly palmed him a ten spot.

"For the oil pan," I said.

Manny smiled that endearing Manny smile that only Manny could muster as he lumbered past me and out the front door. "I'll call you for all my clogs," I yelled after him wanting to compliment him, but that was all my limited vocabulary would allow. In déjà vu fashion, but in reverse, he swung open the hearse-like rear door to his battered blue van and tossed in his tools of the trade. He disappeared momentarily around the far side of his truck, only to reappear as he slid his bulk behind the wheel. With a click and a whine, the Ford Econoline engine caught. Manny, my plumber, shifted into gear, the tires made a slight squeak on the hot asphalt, and he sped down the road and out of sight. He was gone.

Slowly, and with a melancholy flare, I closed the front door, fleetingly seeing the symbolism of closing a door on a chapter of my life. I had left the boy behind, on the other side of that door. A proud man, at ease with himself and his lack of plumbing skills, was born anew. I walked tall and proud into my kitchen and surveyed the damage that lay before me. Soon Joe and I would be in possession of the kitchen of old, before the plumbing crisis, before the clog. No time like the present for a man to clean up a boy's mess, I thought.

I stood at the sink and turned the tap on full, the powerful jet of clear, clean water spewing forth like a mighty river from the stainless steel spigot. I thought about the ordeal that had spanned many months, tilted my head back and let out a much needed chuckle. I looked down into the swirling clear waters in my sink, then allowed my gaze to drift over the counter. That was when I noticed the stopper. It was still where it had been the whole time, next to the spray thing. I looked back to the water...

...it was still rising.

Disappearing into the Shadows

If I slink into the hollowness of the dark,
Mimic your coordination
Would you notice?
Silence is deceiving
It is the foundation for chaos
Walls are constructed
Ripped apart when necessary
Untangle the kinks in the lifeline
I am a shadow
I see more than you know
I fade away without a trace

I've tried to hide my feelings for so long

But I've become so forlorn

And I can't do it anymore

I can't keep putting up walls

And hurting others and myself

I've done it for so long.

I'd risk my life
To feel normal again.
Whatever that may be
And I feel that I have
Risked it all for life,
Even though I may think
I don't value it that much.

(I'm) looking for the right words to say.

that should've been said
because then I wouldn't think the way I do.

And I should have let you know
That I don't want to be this way.

You make me not want to leave my room
I wish you never existed, in my life,
In anyone's life
It's just so unfortunate that anyone
Should feel the way I do
And it's all your fault
And I'm so overwhelmed.

Amy Zimmerman





Slim ain't been on the ranch long, but he done got hisself in the Boss's heart. Jeb shook his head. The boy done slid into all the boys' hearts. Him and his loco horse brung a streak of luck, wolves ain't took any colts and the steers getting' nice and fat. Boss found some nice stock he'd been wantin' for cheap. Hell, the kid could even sit on the loco studcolt's corral without gettin' killed.

Boss was a good man, and fair, but he was jes too set on the colt's bloodlines. Loco

begets loco, no way around it.

The foreman spat on the dusty ground and squinted into the glare of the sun. What the hell was he up to? Hot damn, the stud was letting him stand in the corral. Don't nobody do that and live. He hefted a pitchfork and eyed the distance. No sense in the kid gettin' killed from stupidity.

Slim sidled up to the colt, not looking at him, just studying the coils of the lariat. A soft spot here, a bend there. The colt fidgeted as Slim approached, quietly, gently, never pushing; but he relaxed when Slim just kept moving past. No sense in pushing him, he'd just been pushed and it didn't work. Wasn't a stupid colt like the Boss feared, or mean, jest confused and stubborn. Just ever so calmly ask him to accept the presence of a human. Maybe there would even be time to try some further training. If the Boss didn't have a fit because of the way it was done. He didn't seem the type, though. Slim left the corral. Time was irrelevant when it came to horses, especially with the training of them.

Jeb scratched his head. That ain't how ya break 'em. He watched the skinny kid climb over the fence and not once look behind him. That must be how the kid deals with his own loco horse, confuse the hell out of him. The kid looked up and Jeb beckoned him over. "What're ya doin with the colt, boy?"

He looked uncertain. "Boss says he doesn't care what I do with him." It turned to stubbornness. "Ain't hurting him."

"I know kid. Jes' doan want you getting' hurt." He looked back over at the colt sticking his head over the fence. "Whatever it is, he likes it."

"Yen"

"Going into town after lunch - Boss wants you to take the buckboard."

"We staying for dinner?"

"Yep."

Slim slipped between the fence boards. At a sharp whistle a lanky chestnut cantered up. "Good boy." The gelding gobbled his requisite treat and nuzzled his rider for more. Links to the past. Thoroughbred racing lines ran in the gelding. That's where his weak back and hot temper came from. The boys thought he was crazy, but Slim knew better. The gelding had been through a lot, but the two were an inseparable team, tempered by time and circumstances. "You like it here, don't you?" The gelding whuffed in response. "So do I. How long will we be able to pull this off, 'Daeus?"

"Whoa, lady, whoa." The mare pranced to a halt and flicked her ears back, waiting for Slim to walk to her head. "Good girl, that's a girl." It took only a minimum of movement to unhitch her and put her in a livery stall. That done, it was directly to the dry-goods store. There just were not enough books at the ranch and a hurried flight had made them rather of second priority

"Hey kid," the owner called. "Jes' got in some new books on the morning train." Slim perked right up. "Yeah?"

"Go on back and you can have first pick." Mebbe it was the fact that he read like other boys told yarns, mebbe his open face, but that boy inspired trust. The owner usually let him have free rein of the book section, knowing that he'd find it in better shape than he left it. Slim slipped into the back with a look of hunger on his face. The owner shook his head. Kid might spend a couple of hours back there. His boss needed supplies though, and he was safe enough.

Slim smiled. That man had no idea what a treasure he had. Along with the cheap dime novels that sold well, he had classics. There was Shakespeare and Dante, Homer and Sophocles. Maybe they wouldn't realize it. Maybe here they would just accept that a lean kid really has no story. There might be time to read some this afternoon; after all, it would be a waste to buy them only to leave them behind.

The saloon was crowded. The Boss was the biggest landowner in town and everyone knew him. He had the reputation of fairness, so people came to him with disputes. Tonight it was a small landowner accusing a newcomer of his dog killing a couple of sheep.

The dog in question was a massive wolfhound, much like the ones Slim has known at home. He had been given into Slim's care until the dispute was settled, and seemed quite content where he was.

Jeb looked at the boy. How'd he do it? The dog had been snarlin' and such when he come in, but now his bid ol' head was layin' on the kid's knees, quiet as can be. He'd've believed the dog was a killer when he come in, but now? The kid had a way about him that critters seemed to like. Interestin' to watch.

"I must protest, sir!" the newcomer said. Why did he look so familiar? "I brought this dog to identify one Miss Joanne Hilterbrand." Slim stiffened. Oh shit. "He is a house bred and raised dog and has never hunted in his life."

"Why do you need a dog to find this lady?" Boss asked, a smile playing at his lips. "If she is half as well bred as the dog wouldn't she respond to a letter?"

"Good sir, I realize that this all seems ridiculous to you, but Miss Hilterbrand is a peculiar lady. I'm afraid she has run from her intended husband." The man surveyed the room briefly. "I cannot imagine that she is here, but heaven only knows. She was raised half wild."

The smile no longer played at the corners of his mouth, it engulfed it. "I'm sure if we had any half wild ladies here we'd know, right boys?" The entire room guffawed.

"And yet her parents want her back, and her fiancée is willing to forgive and forget-"
The argument continued and Slim blocked it out. The wolfhound's eyes were a distinctive gold. Why did they look so familiar? A memory clicked into place.

"Vladimir?" The dog whimpered at the whisper. "Vladmirshka! Oh I've missed you so much!" He gave one sharp bark.

"Mikhail! Hush." The man scowled at the dog. "Useless mutt. I told him you'd be useless." The dog growled back and Slim placed a hand on his head.

"Boss, I'll vouch for this dog."

"Slim, just hold him and keep out of it, kid." Why'd he vouch for a dog he's just met half an hour ago? Who knows.

"Boss, I wouldn't trust this man's judgment, but you know me."

"You question me, boy?" the newcomer asked archly. "You, an uneducated little piece of cow dung? You wouldn't know a pure bred show dog from your mother." All the boys bristled at that one.

"Byron McLaughlin, you ruined a driving horse racing him and wanted to drown a litter of pure bred Siamese kittens because you thought they were sickly. Do not insult me, and never insult a man's mother." There was silence as the tiny, story-less kid faced off with a wealthy Easterner.

"Who are you? That never happened." Byron was getting flustered. "Mikhail, come." The dog crouched beside the now standing Slim and growled.

"I'm sorry to have deceived you, Boss, boys. This bastard chased me from my home under threat of marriage. I'm still not sure how, but he convinced my father that he wasn't after me for my dowry and it was arranged without my consent." Joanne looked daggers at her suit-or. "He attempted to abuse me into giving up horse breaking. He just wanted a proper society lady and was willing to attempt to make me one because I was the best-bred woman he could find. He almost shot my best dog hunting, deliberately. And to top it all, he renamed him!"

It took the boss a moment to regain his wits. "Miss Hilterbrand, I am willing to offer you decent accommodations if you wish to stay on. Marriage if it is not too distasteful." Now he looked daggers at Byron. "A society lady such as yourself wouldn't want to be a spectacle."

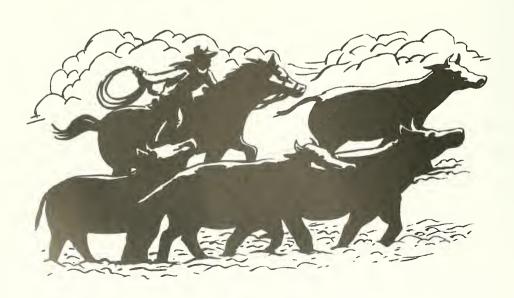
Joanne smiled. "That's the nicest thing anyone has ever said when they found out that I was a woman, but I'll have to decline, Boss. You'll put me back in skirts and pamper me like everyone else."

"I beg to differ, Miss Hilterbrand. You are a good hand on the ranch and you have a way with the colts. I ask you to stay."

"Vladimir, come." She strode to the door, the hairy gray shadow at her heels. "Thank you, Boss, but I cannot. If I could borrow a horse to go back I'll pack and leave tonight."

"I believe Mr. McLaughlin would be more than willing to accommodate." The boss and boys tipped their hats to her as she walked out the door. "Please, come back."

Tears gathered in Joanne's eyes as she mounted the overbred hunter Byron had brought out. There was no hope for it; she would never be able to settle like she wanted to. But she would also never, ever be at the mercy of a man again, no matter what. She turned the gelding and rode off, her dog loping beside.



It's three in the morning And I staved up all night. Drowning in my tears Writing without sight.

Time seems to stand still Since the day you left me. A revolving door Slamming so slowly.

Two years of my life Traded for this. Like a love movie Without a goodbye kiss.

Why was it mine That you chose to break, A promise forever All I loved was at stake.

Now I feel it's been such a long time Since her eyes have met with mine, Why can't you call and say you miss me? The words I want to hear deceive me.

Remember

I did not mean to make you cry. But when I saw tears I knew why. The time we spent had meant so much. You secretly longed to feel my touch.

And after we spent some time together, You hoped some day we'd be together forever. A perfect pair we surely are. An ungodly shame we didn't make it this far.

Time has passed and changed us both. I bet vou remember the first time we spoke. And the first time our lips were tightly sealed. I bet you remember just the way it feels.

And when I gazed into your eyes. All was forgiven, all the pain, all the lies. And so you longed to hold me tight, The sun was wrong, Please stay the night!

But the moon is gone and the morning came, And I know you'll never feel the same. Why do you feel this way? How do I know? I believe true feelings are starting to show.

Now I know why and can plainly see, It wasn't you I was talking about, It was me.

Tom Mehaffey



Joann B. Donigan

If there is one thing that I learned from the death of my Father, it is the immeasurable value of every single life. He was a man, only one man, but his absence, like his presence, has touched the lives of so many people in so many ways. Strangers have approached me to tell me wonderful stories of his ingenuity, his generosity, and his selflessness. Everything he planted grew; he had the gift of nurturing life, whether it was germinating a seed or raising a child. Nature's creatures also had a special respect for him. Every spring he hosted a family of Canadian geese who flew to his pond to have their young: they trusted him to look after their nest if the water rose too high after a storm. When the goslings were born, he would feed the whole family right from his hand until they were ready to fly. A tribe of nearly thirty wild turkeys also made their home in his yard, not a surprise when you consider that he was always buying cracked corn to feed them. Every year a wild box turtle would pay him a visit, just long enough for him to show all of his grandchildren.

He was seventy-nine years old when he died, but most people who knew him were shocked by his death; this was due, in part, to his vibrancy, his passionate approach to life, and his tireless refusal to accept his aging. Most of us never really thought of Dad dying; he never fretted about it. Besides he always seemed to have more energy than any of us, often putting the rest of us to shame with his energy level. Because of his passing, the lives of his family members will never be the same. But the impact hasn't stopped there. We have changed, and in that change stirs the seeds of change for everyone who touches our lives. My coworkers, neighbors, friends, and even the parents of my children's friends have been touched by the void that I now feel in my life, a void that will not go away, even after six months. This emptiness is not only due to his physical absence; I have loved this man all of my life, and despite the fact that I haven't lived at home for twenty years, he was with me every single day.

Needless to say- we were very close. And I don't much like the changes, changes I now live with every single day: I don't see the world the same way that I used to. At times I feel lost in a sea of strangers who don't seem to care or don't even know of my pain. Sometimes I feel that there is nothing in this world that really matters any more: my inspiration has vanished. But just when I am sure that this is truly how I feel, something happens, something that others might see as trivial; it might be the sight of a single deer in the woods, or a hawk flying overhead, or a wild turkey or goose crossing through my yard, or a certain song that follows me into the supermarket or the doctor's office, or a glance at the wall in my kitchen where my father installed a new electrical outlet for me. At times like these I begin to cry, not from sadness, but from remembrance; I will never forget the man he was - is. He is my hero, my guide, my continuity, my inspiration to do my best, be my best, live my best. Yet he never preached a sermon; he never held an office; he never earned a million dollars, he never even finished the eighth grade (he had to leave school to support his parents after his father was blinded in a coal mine accident). His success came from hard work, integrity, and a gentle heart.

In spite of my pain, I have no regrets. My father and I loved each other; we never fought, never neglected each other, never forgot to express our love. Each summer, I would travel six hours on the Pennsylvania Turnpike to spend two weeks in my child-hood. He taught me many things during those forty weeks. I learned the names of countless shrubs, the proper way and time to plant almost anything, the best places in which to find wild raspberries, practical and "proper" techniques for making stained glass lampshades, how to raise my children to be "hard-working, God-fearing" people, and most of all, how to think through problems; "Just study it", he would always say. I never have done anything without thinking of my Dad and remembering what he would say. Every summer, at the end of those two weeks, as I was preparing to leave, I hugged my parents (at least four or five times each). They would laugh, knowing what was coming each time, but as I hugged them I also looked at their faces, not knowing if it would be for the last time, the last summer. This year, it was.

At my father's funeral, my sister and I performed the eulogy; she wrote a poem, and I read the letter I had written to my parents on the occasion of their fiftieth wedding anniversary the previous year. When I finished, I stopped for a moment, looked around the room, and decided to add one line to my reading. "The love inside- we take it with us when we go." I stepped down from the podium, walked past my father's casket, placed my hand on it and said, "I love you Dad - forever". He took that with him; I'm sure of it.



They said I could do it, they said I would fit. They told me I was the one. They told me I could get it done.

And here I am thirty years later, from a busboy up to a waiter, making her proud, singing it loud.

B & W, in living color

Dressing my part, night after night. Serving each dish, bite after bite. Caring for my tables, sharing my fables.

Toiling, boiling, spoiling for fun.
Burning, churning, learning to run.
Plates and cups and dishes
and glasses,
the thank you ma'am's and
kissing the 'arses.

From Alfalfa's to Arby's and full-time sales, falling from bridges onto the rails. Wearing my black, white and real bowtie, fussing and mussing asking myself why.

And when I check in on her at four, after cleanup, a shower, gently opening the door.
Listening to her breathe, watching her dream, drifting with her, being a team.

Suddenly, it's all worth all I can sweat. It occurs to me with all I can bet. We're meant to be here and there, I love her. I sweat.

She loves my outfit, my little tux. She loves the jokes, my fifty yucks. She loves my hiney, my hair, my mole. She completes me, making me whole.

I touch her eyebrows and the whole of the house, sing a soft song in her nighttime, knowing I'm living in the right time.

She's rolling over and fluffing the pillow.
Her lips full and puffy, can lips billow?
I wonder what she sees, what she knows,
all of my worries, some of my woes.

As I tuck her beneath her covers, I hope she knows I love her. Softly climb in, knowing I win.

Yes, they said I could, they knew I would, but how could I know, I'd love her so.

The dawn awaits a few hours to come, an hour to dread for some.

But not me, now now, not later, a year, a decade, for years, always more than a waiter.

I don't want to let go.
Of your band,
Of my dreams
I don't want to leave,
Fall apart at the reams.
I don't want to smile
If it isn't for you.
I don't want to cry
But it's all I can do.

Sarah Jacobs

LOnly Wanted

Across the broken landscape Visions pass me by Fleeting images floating I wonder as I cry Where to go when it's over What will be left of time I only wanted to live it I can't believe that's a crime Memories drifting in sorrow Destroying what's left of life Tears in the fabric of tomorrow Only end in tears of strife Today is drifting much farther I can't see quite how far away I only wanted to live it Now I die another day

Amy Seibert

With You in My Life

Everything I need I found in you Everything I want Is in there too Before life was good Now it is great Everything has changed now I believe in Fate With you in my life It makes me so glad The thought of losing you Makes me so sad I still have some walls To protect me from you These slowly crumble If you only knew I hate needing someone More than you know But I quess I'm ok If you never go

Amy Seibert

Becoming an Interpreter

"Smart move, Ms. Interpreter!" I silently congratulated myself as I tucked my presentation notes back into my jacket pocket where I had put them before starting my tour. Only a mere thirty minutes into my new career as a volunteer historical museum interpreter, I had needed those notes to describe the unusual characteristics of one of our museum collections. How disheartening it could have been if I'd had to answer my tour group question with "I don't know" on my very first solo tour! I smiled confidently and led the tour forward.

For a long time I had thought about becoming a volunteer at Fonthill, a unique historical museum. On the morning of my initial tour as an interpreter, I discovered the training and preparation I had made was paying off.

A volunteer interpreter is one who explains, translates, and relates information to visitors while guiding them through a museum. The history of the dwelling and its surroundings, along with the museum contents, are recorded and displayed to the public by its owners. However, my objective as interpreter is to help the public think about and discuss what they are seeing and learning, not just tell them about the objects they are viewing. In many museums today, presenting the past to the public has become a business operation requiring a small army of volunteers in addition to paid staff. Fonthill Museum has 70 volunteers and 5 full-time staff members.

My involvement in interpreting started when the local museum, a National Trust Landmark popular with American and International visitors to the area, needed to replenish its dwindling staff of volunteers. Daily tours of school children and members of civic organizations were large and several months of advance reservations had been scheduled for busloads of foreign tourists. The museum administrator made urgent telephone requests to friends and families for volunteer interpreters. And I was among those invited to become a member of the volunteer pool!

First came an appointment for an interview with the administrator. Once inside the front door I was welcomed by a gracious woman who, immediately following the interview, took me on a walking tour of the museum. As we walked from room to room, my tour guide lectured on the unique architectural wonders of the "castle," so called a castle because it resembles a medieval manor - tall and a little forbidding. The scope and scale of the building is impressive! A profusion of fine and decorative arts, typical of the objects people collected at the time, is artfully arranged throughout the museum on furni-

ture, bookcases and flat surfaces. Items include ancient pottery, pre-industrial tools, pewter, tin, pottery and a large collection of early American Windsor chairs. (Security roping prevents visitors from touching the chairs.) Wall hangings include landscape oil paintings, framed etchings, Italian plaster casts, and even a collection of medieval armor-all displayed in tandem in some rooms. The owner's personal collection of 6,000 books is shelved on many built-in bookcases.

We continued on to the main attraction of the house, the ornamental tile collection. During the 19th century arts and crafts movement, the owner, Henry Chapman Mercer, designed and produced a large volume and variety of tiles. The movement focused on beautifully handcrafted objects and the tiles were produced during a time period when crafts were considered serious art. Tucked into many-out-of-the-way places throughout the building, Old World tile setters had skillfully embedded the tiles into many surfaces that included floors, ceilings, walls, and fireplace areas. Many tile treasures will be found by my tour groups, I thought to myself, if they observe their surroundings as they tour. If I point out a few "hidden" ones, perhaps they'll continue the search as we tour.

Following a series of several narrow twisting staircases, we climbed higher and higher, finding unexpected rewards at each level. On one level a large intricate mosaics tile scene resembled stained glass and adorned an interior wall. Quite stunning, it was! The tiles paint a picture of pre-industrial farming scenes from the local area in striking bold primary colors depicting the seasons of the year. Turning a corner and arriving at the next level, I viewed a collage of early medieval tiles, part of the owner's vast foreign tile collection, set into the wall in an artistic pattern resembling a Persian rug. Advancing up the steps to the highest level, we walked outdoors and onto the terrace to survey the landscape for a final view of the castle, grounds and surrounding forest. An abundance of trees and flowers native to North America had been planted in random fashion throughout the property many years ago and created a natural environment common in this area before "civilization" and "development" took over.

I marveled at the afternoon's activities. As we descended the stairs together, my guide, choosing her words carefully, explained, "When you're an interpreter, you'll discover firsthand you have to give a performance well enough so that people believe the tour was a worthwhile experience. You can tell you've succeeded by the pleased expressions on their faces. That's the best compliment you can get."

I made several trips to the museum when other tour guides were giving tours. I took notes, asked questions, and in general observed their styles of presentation. Some guides focused on Mercer's skills as an architect/designer, while others discussed his tile collection and the Moravian Tile Works. Eventually, I stopped at the museum office and picked up a packet of informa-

tion, which I used as a reference guide in developing my own thematic tour. (Later on the presentation notes were safely tucked inside my jacket pocket.) I was challenged to motivate the visitors to learn and remain interested and intrigued during and after the one-hour tour.

After preparing an outline with informative background notes focusing on the tiles and artifacts in the house, I volunteered to conduct my first tour. On the appointed day, I arrived in plenty of time before the tour to check into the office to see if there were any tour changes, learn about any visitor characteristics and put on my name tag.

As the tour progressed and I walked confidently from one room to the next, it occurred to me that I was developing my own personal style of interaction with the group. I was actually becoming a "performer," offering bits of information during the tour that would make it meaningful to the visitors. I was able to field questions about the unfamiliar objects with the use of the notes in my pocket. And I was comfortable knowing I had the facts handy should I need them. At the conclusion of the tour, I restated and reviewed the important facts of the museum and its holdings. I asked several members of the group to tell me something about the tour experience. I extended an invitation for them to sign the guest book and to revisit the museum for other special events. As an interpreter, I had helped the visitors achieve a successful, meaningful learning experience and the museum had gained a new person for its volunteer pool!







Photos by Larissa Keister







by Liz Krause





You try so hard To make it better, To give me something Worth living for. Because you've been there before And you know what it's like. You try so little I feel like I'm not there I might as well not be there You ignore me, When I'm in a bad mood. But when I'm in a good mood We're hest friends. You just don't understand That you're both tearing me apart. So many have tried So few have cared You give your all And mean all

You don't even care

And I still feel torn

And my feelings remain ignored

You could've had me
But you didn't want me
Then
You wanted to play cround
All over town
And do what you do bestBreak hearts.

I just don't understand,
I just can't
Why would you do that to someone?
Allow them to put so much work and care into you,
And end up pushing them away
After they catch feelings
And you want the physical part of the relationship
And not the emotional.
I just don't understand it.
And I know you had feelings too,
So don't lie
Because you can't lie to me anymore,
Because I know your story.

poems by Amy Zimmerman drawings by Julie Demet Forever my love, it's as simple as a dream
Still together though that's not how it seems
A place in each other's heart shining like a beam
But apart is how we are just living a dream
-Ahnjel Weaver

Beneath My Skin

You have no idea of my battles
Rapids and twisters of fury
Churning, frothing at intervals
What they see; fragments of me
Which mask shall I wear today?
All is not well below deck

The fury has its place in the soul

Scared of being stripped to my hollowness
Scared of facing targeted spitefulness
Awaken subconscious stereotypes
Suffering can have its deliverance
Release the soul from its tomb

Sentience brings wisdom
Wisdom is relative
What have they learned?
Nothing...unless...
They find the peephole to the world beneath my skin

-Tia Seeley

-Tom Mehaffey-

BROTHER BY CHOICE

When I have a question,
He gives an answer.
When I'm drunk on stage,
He'll let me know I'm a bad dancer.

When I have a problem, He'll help me solve it. When I want to give up, He'll never let me quit.

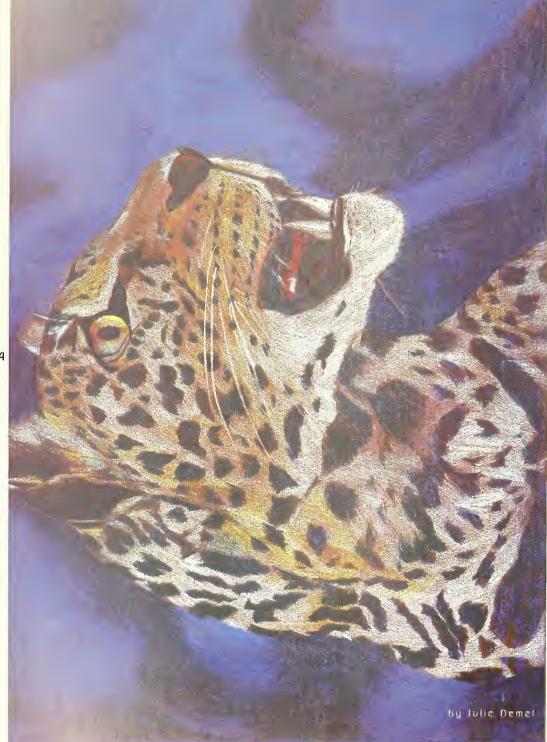
When I have that sad expression Written across my face, He'll find out my struggle, And put me in my place.

When everyone else Turns their back, I look to him And he'll pick up their slack.

A friend for life, He'll always be. Born to other parents, Not even blood, unfortunately.

> Only recently have I learned, This brother's name. But everything I just described, For him I'd do the same.

Keep on fighting, Never fail, never stop. As long as we're together, We'll always be on top.



What If you loved and the person did not know it, Or if you showed them but they did not want it, Are you scared to tell someone that you love them? Well, here are the reasons that I was scared too. The problem now is I lost many things, Many things that I loved and adored. If God loves us all then how are we special? Different from everyone around us, If you needed love and didn't receive it, Then why would you believe in love at all? I was told that love knew no distance, I guess no one is right in this instance, Love fools us all and makes fools of us all, But why do people search for love at all? Doesn't it seem pointless to you, If what you strive for didn't love you, Or maybe they did and just didn't tell you, How would you feel if that happened to you? I know that some are scared of rejection, I know why people are scared of the profession That to say that you love and not hear it back,

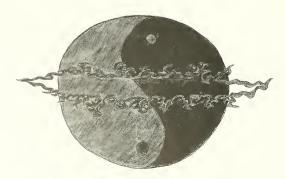
Why would I write this if I were going away? So that no one else makes the mistake that I did, Some say it's better to love than to have lost, But what if you lost someone you never said love to?

To be told it's a strong word and that you don't deserve it

I wish I could go and just wither away,
Because no one would care if I were to stay,
If someone loves me then they sure haven't showed it,
Why would I stay here if no one cares about me?
I'll bury a hole and just say "screw it."
Because why would I stay here if no one cares about me?

Strike Three

You should know I care about you dearly But understand I am feared sincerely My heart has been held and crushed I have my whole life, which seems to be rushed Don't feel insulted I want you to be involved in it I treasure my trust with you It seems just too good to be true I'm warming up to your being Took me awhile but now I'm seeing I can't take my feelings for granted So cautious I'm frantic Either that or I'd pull away Seeing your face is like a sun's ray I'd love to touch you, seize the moment But I'm afraid I'll get burnt by your body's solvent A certain solution that is forbidden Yet I'm linked to it as if it's written



Late November 4th - Early November 5th, 1993

As Sean read the comics in her Fortress of Solitude, time passed, and she grew less angry and frustrated, borne away by the whimsical plots and gimmicks of the Silver Age tales...until the time when her super-hearing picked up Sherry's return to the apartment. She heard Sherry and her date (Steve...the name was indelibly written in her brain thanks to her power of super recall) laughing and giggling as they entered the front room of the apartment. Sean wanted desperately not to hear Sherry having a good time with "that jerk" Steve, but she couldn't help but listen.

Clearly, Sherry and Steve were enjoying each other's company. Soon they began to make out. Sean knew that it was just a matter of time before they moved into Sherry's bedroom. "I can't listen to this," she thought. "I've got to get out of here." Because the door to Sean's mini-fortress opened into Sherry's bedroom, she had to move quickly, but with super-speed this was not difficult. She ran into Sherry's bedroom, opened the window, and flew outside before Sherry and Sean could make their way into the bedroom.

But where could she go? She had come to think of Sherry's apartment as home in the few days she had spent there. But she couldn't stay there tonight; she just needed to flee. That left her only one real option. She could go back to where she had been living before she met sherry, back "home" to her dorm room. She hadn't wanted to go there before now, because she didn't want everyone in the dorms to know about her change. Fortunately for Sean, Sherry had told everyone earlier.

"Damn it," she thought to herself, "I'm not ready for this!" Still, she couldn't think of anywhere else she could go. Going home to her mom's house was out of the question, and she didn't feel like sleeping on a park bench or on the moon or any similarly uncomfortable place. With a shrug of resignation she flew off for the dorms. Soon, she arrived over her former dorm building. Only a few people were walking about, and none of them had spotted her. Quickly, she flew down to the dorm entrance. She could feel the stares of the various passersby as she walked forward, determined not to let them shake her confidence. She found her dorm room door and turned the knob to open it...but it was locked. "Damn, where did I leave those keys?" she thought, trying to unravel the events of the past few days. As she stood in thought, the door opened and her dorm-mate, Fred, stood there.

He did a double take. "So, it's true," he commented with his usual wide grin. "Come on in." As she did, he closed the door behind her. "All anybody's been talking about lately is that party where everyone changed," Fred continued. "Have you gotten to meet any of the others?" "Uh, no, not really," she replied, realizing that apart from Sherry, Dan, Christine, Dave, Gary, and Laura, she hadn't really met anyone else from the party, and most of these she had only met because they had some sort of special power. "Oh well. There were some really weird changes. Like one guy, he became a red, furry thing, a, uh, 'Tickle-Me-Elmo," I think. And another guy, who became a big, blue, furry...um, 'Wiggle-Me-Elvis,' I think, and, uh..." "Well?" Sean interrupted. Aren't you going to ask me what it's like?" She just

wanted to get the inevitable questions about her gender change over with quickly as possible. "Um, what?" Fred asked. "You know, now that I'm changed and all, you're probably curious about it, right?" Sean said. Fred replied, "Oh. Okay. What's it like having superpowers? That must be really great!? I guess you can fly and lift big things too." "Um, yeah, and a lot more too.." Soon they drifted into a discussion of Supergirl's powers that lasted far longer than she thought it would. Surprisingly, she was shocked when Fred never asked her about the whole sexual gender change. In a way, she was relieved that the subject didn't come in. After a few hours, Fred finally admitted that he wanted to get some sleep. As they turned in for the night, each in their separate beds, Fred slapped himself on the forehead.

"There's something I was supposed to give you, in case you cam back here." He handed her a sheet of paper on which was the address for a local news station, along with a form letter describing how this station very much would like to interview the various Wild turkey Kicker "victims" and describing the small fee the would pay for such interviews. As she drifted off to sleep, she thought, "What the hell. I obviously can't hide any longer. What have I got to lose?"

November 6th, 1993, morning

Sean awoke in the morning, in her familiar dorm room. Groggily, she got out of her bed and stretched. Out of habit, she gathered a towel, a washcloth, and various other items and headed for the shared bathroom. Walking barefoot through the carpeted halls, she strolled through the open door and turned to her left, where the showers stood. Entering the nearest unoccupied shower stall, she pulled the curtain closed, hung her towel on the curtain rod, set down the other items she was carrying and stripped off her costume, which she then hung with the towel. Turning on the water, she luxuriated under the shower's warm caress, feeling more and more relaxed. After a few moments of indulgent pleasure, she proceeded to give herself a good cleaning. As she finished, she turned the water off and reached for her towel...which was no longer there. Nor was her costume.

"Great, what now?" she thought bitterly, dripping wet and entirely naked. She opened the curtain, hoping to be able to sneak back to her room before anyone saw her. As she did, there was a flash of light which would have momentarily blinded her, were her eyes not as super as the rest of her. Instead, she saw a guy she recognized as living in the dorms (though she didn't know his name) holding a Polaroid camera that was now developing the picture he had just taken of her. "What are you doing?" she asked, momentarily taken aback. Instead of saying a word, however, he simply stepped back and took another picture. She started to walk towards him, but was distracted by a sound behind her. She turned to see another shower curtain opening to reveal Jake Mallory, football champ and Resident Advisor for this floor of dorms. Apparently, he had just finished toweling off after taking his shower, as he was in the process of covering his firm, muscular body with a towel. As he stepped out of the shower, he noticed Sean's naked female form. So startled was he that he dropped his towel, leaving him naked as well.

Another flash of a picture being taken brought Sean out of her daydream and she rushed forward at lightning speed, grabbed the camera and the developed pictures away from the shutterbug. "Stop taking pictures of me, damn it!" she yelled at him. As his face filled with fear, he turned and fled. She considered chasing after him when Jake spoke. "Women aren't allowed in here." Sean turned to him. "What?" "Um...this is one of the men's dorms. Women aren't supposed to be in this restroom..." he told her, a bit hesitantly as he picked up his towel while eyeing her chest. "But...I live here," she replied. He thought for a moment, wrapping his towel around his waist to hide his obvious arousal. "Oh, you must be Sean. I heard about what happened." He paused, and then continued, still staring at her body. "But you can't stay here. That would violate the cohabitation rules."

Sean's heart sank. She knew that this was true, though she had nowhere else to go. She ran back to her dorm room, planning to pack her stuff and leave. Hanging on the doorknob was her costume and towel. She turned the doorknob, but it was locked. "Damn," she thought, "Fred must have woken up after I did and left, locking the door." She knew she could break down the door, but that would cause further complications. Life was getting complicated enough without extra hassles. Resignedly, she began to dress, right there in the corridor, as her frustration was slowing her to normal speed, despite her ability to move at super speed.

One college student walked into the corridor before she had pulled her leotard over her breasts, gasped and turned to walk in the other direction. "Is there anyone on campus who hasn't seen me naked now?" she wondered to herself as she finished dressing. Her boots were still in the room, but she could do without them. She left the camera in front of the door, but tucked the photos into her belt. As she did, she couldn't help but admire her pictures; the third photo showed her and Jake standing next to each other, both naked. "I'm gorgeous," she thought, "but he's got a nice body, too..." Immediately, she tried to put thoughts of his naked body out of her mind, trying to reassure herself that her admiration for him was mere jealousy over his well-muscled body and not anything sexual. "Now where?" she thought to herself, before recalling the note Fred gave her about the local NBC affiliate wanting to interview Wild Turkey Kicker "victims." "Well; this will give me something to do, anyway," she thought. First, she flew back to Sherry's apartment (nobody was home), where she picked up a spare pair of boots. She then flew off to be interviewed.

November 6th, 1993, mid-day

She talked to various news people at the station. They seemed visibly excited about interviewing her, and scheduled her for a live interview for the noon edition of the news, which didn't give them much time to prepare. They coached her on some of the types of questions that they would be asking her, but she still felt nervous about the whole thing. "Can I go through with this?" she wondered. "Can I admit on TV who I was? That I was cross-dressed at the party? My God, my mom watches this station! My mom will

know...the whole world will know..." Nonetheless, she knew that she had to do this sooner or later. She had to tell her story; she couldn't hide forever. She gathered her courage together as she sat in front of the cameras.

"In five, four, three..." she heard a stagehand say, and then they were on the air. "Good afternoon, this is Mark Daniels for NBC news. With us today is, well, you can call her Supergirl. She is another victim of the Wild Turkey Kicker Club. Hello, Supergirl." "Hello, Mark," she replied. "You weren't always Supergirl, now were you? Tell us your story, if you wouldn't mind." Mark continued while eagerly staring at Sean, "Why did you decide to visit the Wild Turkey Kicker Club on that fateful night? Why you decided to dress as Supergirl? What exactly did you see happen that night? "Well, Mark," she began, "my girlfriend thought that I would look good as Supergirl, and I trusted her judgment." Sean started to wonder to herself, "Should I have said former girlfriend?" Returning to the questions, she continued, "And so, then, when we went, well, then, everyone was changed." "But tell us exactly what happened to cause the transfor..." Mark began to say before he was interrupted by a dark figure crashing onto the set, which rushed towards Sean, saying, "Supergirl, I know someone who can explain it all!" After the interruption, the producer said, "Let's go to commercial!" As the figure got closer, Sean could make out a blue suit of some kind. Closer and closer it came, until she realized he was the blue Power Ranger.

"Hi Supergirl, my name is Timmy. I was at the club with my mother when this thing happened," the Power Ranger said. "My father was at the party and my mother, who is now a walking banana, and I were looking for him..." Timmy was then interrupted by his father. "Hi, my name is John. I know exactly what happened to cause the transformations." Just then they heard the stagehand say, "We're coming back from commercial in five...four...three..." Mark then said, "Welcome back, we have breaking news. Joining Supergirl and myself are Timmy and his father, John. They were also at the party on that dreadful Halloween night. Now, John knows exactly what happened that night." Turning to John, Mark asked, "So, tell us what happened," John started to say, "I hope we have enough time for this. It may take more than a few minutes." "We have all the time you need, John," Mark said anxiously. Taking a deep breath, John started to talk. "Some of you may not know of a wizard named Aculcar of the Orange Stripe, but he is the key figure behind all this. Aculcar is an actual wizard of considerable power. I was walking towards the club door, when I made a magical gesture I saw in a book; I was practicing it to impress everyone at the party. That is when Aculcar appeared next to me. He must have recognized the gesture as a secret wizard hand signal for 'Follow me to the Treasury." I did some research afterwards to find out if this gesture ws real and to my astonishment it was an actual signal. He tapped me on the shoulder, introduced himself, and asked me about some kind of amulet. I told him I had no idea about what he was talking about. Being a persistent wizard, he didn't leave me alone. He kept bugging me about this amulet. By them we were inside the club. I went to the club to be with some friends, so I ignored him again and again. I eventually made a rude hand gesture to him; this gesture was not a magical one, if you know what I mean. This frustrated him so much, that he seemed to probe my mind,

looking for the truth. It was quite painful, felt like my head was going to split in half. I guess when he found out the truth, he realized he was at a place where everyone was not what he or she seemed. Next thing I know, I heard his shout, 'I've had it with this roomful of FAKES!' When I turned to look at him, he disappeared in a puff of smoke. Everyone at the party was transformed into what they were costumed as, and eventually gained some of the abilities and at times the mindset of that form."

The camera panned on to Mark, but he didn't say anything. He was in a state of shock, with his mouth wide open. Realizing that Mark just made a fool of himself in front of the cameras, Supergirl asked John a question. "John, I went back to the club shortly after it happened. Why did the police arrive?" John looked at Supergirl and said, "Well, there was chaos inside and outside of the club. I guess they arrived to try to get control of the situation in and around the club. Eventually things calmed down enough for the officers to start getting their needed statements from the 'victims." "Were you there all night? Mark finally asked. "Yes, the fire trucks and ambulances showed up throughout the night. They took some of the injured transformed to the hospital," John said. "That is when our news van arrived," Mark said. Supergirl turned to Mark and said, "Well, Mark, I know the truth now. I have to digest it all and I guess I'll have to learn to live as Supergirl for the rest of my life. As much as I would love to stay, I have to run. I have to get to the bank before they close. I have a check I need to deposit" "Well, we would like to thank you Sean, or shall we call you Supergirl?" Supergirl just smiled. "We would also like to thank Timmy, the blue Power Ranger, and his father John, the newest wizard to the world. This is one of the stories we are working on for the six o'clock news: I will be interviewing a man who has been transformed into a Roman Centurion. Be sure to tune in. this is Mark Daniels saying have a great afternoon." When Mark turned towards Supergirl, her chair was spinning and she was out the door in a flash. "Well, I guess she really wanted to get to the bank," Timmy said, with a giggle. Outside, Supergirl took off flying towards Sherry's apartment. She wanted to get some clothes that would fit over her costume. She realized she didn't want to be seen as Supergirl all the time. She wanted to conceal the fact, just as Superman has the alter ego of Clark Kent. To the real world, she would be Sean Danvers, hiding her real identity as Supergirl. After she returned to the apartment and put on some clothes, she then called a cab. Five minutes later the cab had arrived. She got in the back seat and when she closed the door, the cabbie said, "Where to, ma'am?" Now that she knew why the transformation had occurred, she let out a sigh of relief. Sean then replied, "Take me to the City Bank, please." "Okay!" replied the cabbie and put the car in drive and proceeded to the closest branch of the City Bank.

I dreamt I woke up next to somebody I love Instead I woke up next to you-When did you stop caring? Because I never stopped caring Never

When did you stop being my friend?

Because I never stopped being there for you Never
I wish this was all a dream

Then I could forget about you a lot faster,

And get over you a lot easier
I would just tell myself,

"It was all a dream."

You hesitate to even acknowledge my presence-I say hello and it takes you awhile to respond, If at all. It harts my feelings so much-You don't care if I'm dead or alive. Why do I bother?

Why am I so stupid?

If I knew the answer
To all these questions,
I would be able to look positively to the future
And find somebody
That would care and would be there for me,
Always.





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The Gleaner

High School Writing Competition

The English department is very happy to have sponsored its fifth high school writing competition, which was designed to showcase the work of young writers in the area. We are amazed at the talent, sensitivity, and ear for language in their poetry and prose.

Our thanks and congratulations go to them, their families, and, of course, their English teachers!

L. M.

77

The grandfather clock

Draped in whispers of cobwebs

Sleeps

Forgotten

Cloaked in shadows

In the damp basement

His tick

An echo

In the ears of days gone by.

Time

Frozen

In the unmoving hands

Minute's and hours

Stealing past

Unnoticed in the darkness.

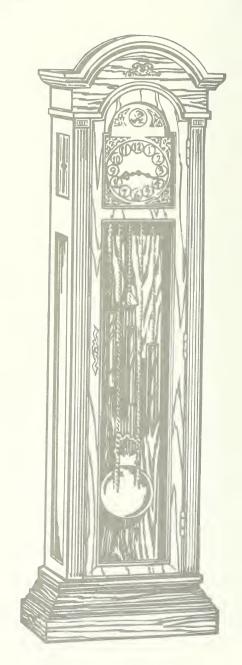
Dust

Thick

On the clock's face

Beneath which

Faded Roman numerals



Hre hidden.

Memories

Of vibrant chimes

and polished oak

and the crisp tick-tock

Of passing time

Hover

In the stale air

Like dying sparks-

Still

Ancient and alone

He waits

In suffocating silence

While upstairs

Sunlight and Progress

Dance.

LAURA BENNETT The Baldwin School Grade 9 Dr. Ledlie

The Flute

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When my grandfather passed away, grief wrapped its mournful arms around my family and hugged us tight.

My father cried.

My mother cried.

I cried harder than both of them out together.

Unlike them, however, I was not crying because of our loss. I was hysterical because those evil villains that call themselves my parents had taken away my flute. Now, you have to understand how extraordinary this flute actually was. My family and I had just taken a trip to Florida to visit my poor grandfather who was slowly dying. In order to keep me occupied, they set me loose in a toy store and told me to pick out whatever my heart desired. Of course at seven years old, everything looked exciting and I wanted it all. I skipped towards the crafts aisle, but came to a screeching halt. There on the cold, metal shelf directly in front of me sat the most amazing, most fantastic basket of wooden flutes in the history of toy stores. My eyes danced with enchantment as a brilliant ray of light from above illuminated the basket. Granted, this magical beam was coming from the fluorescent light fixtures on the ceiling of the store, but at the time, this detail was insignificant. I seized a black flute with engraved white musical notes and flew down the aisle in search for the man with the money.

My story continues on the airplane ride home, while my mother stared blankly out the window, and I played my flute. Not only did I learn "Mary Had A Little Lamb," but by the time the aircraft had landed, "The Star Spangled Banner" and "Three Blind Mice" were almost complete as well. Not wanting to miss my grandfather's last moments, my dad had remained in Florida. When we arrived home, I completely forgot about the fact that he was out of town, or the fact that my close relative was about to die. It's not like you can blame me! I had this unbelievable music-making contraption to attend to. While my mom sat in her bed all week by the phone so she would be the first to learn of any new updates, I was dressing up in dazzling costumes and prancing around the house pretending I was the band leader of a parade.

That was when the hurricane hit.

I am not talking metaphorically. A real hurricane, Hurricane Andrew, was headed straight for my father in Florida. My grandfather was too ill to fly elsewhere, and my dad refused to leave his side. My mom was horrified at the possibility of losing a father-in-law and a husband. The only real importance I found in the impending disaster was its inspiration on my music. After many frustrating hours, however, I came to the sad conclusion that "It's Raining, It's Pouring, The Old Man Is Snoring" could not be played on an instrument. I had also decided that keeping my flute-playing talent to myself, and I should share it with the world for the good of mankind- or at least to cheer up Mommy. On the rare occasion that she emerged from her bedroom and slipped downstairs, I would execute various concerts in hopes to bring a smile to her miserable face. I never quite received the adulation I sought after. "Why don't you go check on your brother and make sure he isn't burning down the house?" she requested instead. This was frustrating, but I persevered.

Soon after, what one would call a miracle occurred. My grandfather passed away comfortably in his sleep late one night, just hours before the storm was predicted to hit. Daddy later explained that he died like one of those angels you often watch in the sappy drama films, with his family by his side, and a smile smeared across his face. Dad called up the airlines that next afternoon and took the very last possible flight out of Miami before the hurricane came. When the front door of our house creaked open, my parents embraced in an ocean of tears. They lit the memorial candle and sat in the kitchen grieving together. I had never seen two people so upset in my entire life. Of course I realized then and there my mission was clear. All of the countless hours I spent practicing my flute had been leading up to this moment. I was determined to cheer up my parents. I ran to my room, threw on my favorite outfit, scurried back downstairs and started to play. And I played. And I played. I played every single solitary song, nursery rhyme, and commercial jingle known to man, along with other melodies made up on the spot.

Midway through "Somewhere over the Rainbow," I heard footsteps coming down the hall towards the living room. Finally, some acknowledgement, I thought. There, through the doorway, I saw the outline of my dad. He stormed into the room and ripped the toy from my little fingers. The shock and the force threw me backward into the sofa. I watched in horror while he stomped furiously back into the kitchen, my treasure crumbling in his enormous hands. The pieces were flung on top of the refrigerator, completely out of reach of a seven-year-old.

It took me a few seconds to realize what had just happened. My eyes filled slowly with tears, and I exploded like a bomb.

My father was crying.

My mother was crying.

I cried harder than both of them put together. My grandfather was dead, but more importantly, I had lost my absolute favorite possession.

After a few days, my parents were much calmer. My dad apologized, and together we deposited what was left of the flute into the kitchen trash. While the pieces collected at the bottom of the can, I had a grown-up moment. My toy was gone just as Daddy's dad was gone, neither of which were ever coming back. I could always buy another flute, but he could never buy another father. I turned to my dad and gave him a big hug. It suddenly dawned on me that he would never be able to hug his Daddy like this ever again. Together we cried.

KERRI SITRIN Abington Friends School Grade 12 Mary Lynn Ellis

Nose Jobs and Shampoo at a Weekend Retreat

Shampooless Girl:

Do I look fat? I mean, this is a tee-shirt; people look fat in tee-shirts. But why are they looking at me so funny? Is something wrong? Did I say something wrong? Look at her. She's staring at me. No, she's glaring at me. Is there something on my nose? Is it my shoes? Do my feet look big? I have big feet, I know. But do they smell? Oh no! Do my feet stink? I can't smell anything...wait! What is that smell? Is it me? There's something in my teeth. I can't feel it. Should I look in the mirror? Or wait? But I just brushed my teeth. Oh no! Is that toothpaste running down my chin? No, of course not. What is it? Hello? Why are they looking at me like that? I just need shampoo. Shampoo. Is that the wrong word? Do they not understand? I do have soap; I could use soap. I think my brother uses soap on his hair. It must be okay. But shampoo is better. Should I ask again? Did they not hear me? Is that it? Someone's coming. She has Herbal Essences. Ew. Gross. I don't want to smell like flowers. But it's shampoo. Is she looking at me? Or staring?

Girl with the Nose:

"What is wrong with that girl? Does she not know how to pack? What a loser! Look at her. She's so pathetic, standing there. Too bad no one is going to help her." The girl turned her hairdryer back on and started blasting her perfectly straight, perfectly conditioned, streaked blonde hair. She could smell her Rosemary scented shampoo. It was good shampoo. She used it every day and there was no debating which girl in the locker room had the nicest hair. And her teeth. Wired for no fewer than 18 months to achieve this perfect row of pearly whites. Her nose was dainty and cute. It should be, since it only cost her daddy \$4000.

"Oh no. She is not!" The girl watched another girl, one carrying a cute pink pail, walking over to the shampooless freak standing in the middle of the room. "She's going to give her the shampoo. No way! She's such a loser. Why would she want to talk to her? Gross!"

I couldn't even tell which way I should turn the faucet to get the hot water. The water kept running from steaming hot to icy cold every thirty seconds. Standing in my robe, I looked at my collection of shampoos: Ultra Swim is case we used the camp's pool, Herbal Essences for the nights we had mixers with the boys' group, and Pantene Pro-V for everyday use. As I was picking up the bottle of Pantene, I heard a voice.

"Uh...does anyone have any shampoo I could borrow?"

For the next three minutes, all that followed was the sound of running water. Hairdryers froze their blasts of heat, toothbrushes halted between teeth, and the door to the locker room stopped the continuous opening and closing. A few girls looked up at the girl who'd asked for the shampoo. She was skinny, wearing a white t-shirt with the name of some fencing organization, and black Adidas shorts. Her hair was short, just below her ears, and she had a few bangs. I noticed, too, that her nose was big. A lot of the girls here had had nose jobs on their 16th birthdays. This one still had braces, too. Everyone else had perfectly white, perfectly straight teeth. She seemed a little weird.

"Does anyone have shampoo?" she repeated, this time a little more loudly and aggressively.

Immediately the silence stopped and all the girls got back to their primping. I took another glance at her, as she stood with a totally confused look on her face.

The shower stall was less than 4 feet by 4 feet and the drain had hair and old soap stuck in it. Totally gross, I thought. I pulled the curtain over and noted all the mildew on the bottom. I set my soaps and shampoo, which were in a pink plastic pail, in the bottom of the stall. As I was about to step in, I realized the girl with the braces was still standing in the middle of the room. I looked around at my friends, who were getting back to their business. She continued standing there. Move, I thought. But she didn't and I started to feel bad. I walked over and handed her my bottle of Herbal Essences, oddly enough. When I returned to my shower, the water finally seemed to be running at the right temperature, and for some reason, the hair in the drain didn't seem as disgusting as before.

ALICE GEORGE
The American Academy
Grade 12
Dr. Sharon Traver

He is black and white. When he vawns, I can see a mouth full of yellow teeth. He is never tired, except on hot summer days. He likes to chase birds and bite little kids. His name is Alfred and he only comes up to my knees.

Alfred is my one-and-only childhood dog, and arguably, my greatest childhood failure. He lives out back in a run we built for him years ago when he wouldn't stop chewing on picnic tables, digging up flowers, and terrorizing kids in the back yard. I take him for walks when I can spare the time, and feed him when he needs to be fed. That is basically all the attention I give him, though he wants more. He would gladly spend hours jumping up on me, being scratched, or chasing after balls in the grassy jungle of his run, but so much else of life seems to constantly displace the appeal of soiled clothes and canine drool. And that's how it's always been.

I got Alfred six Januaries ago, and he grew up a mess-making puppy whose puppy habits never faded. Our family's busy life of farm, church and school interfered with breaking down these childish inclinations. He remained mean and unruly, despite obedience classes. For these enduring characteristics, I label Alfred a failure. Not a failure of his own fashioning, but of mine. Although his mix of Border collie and beagle blood makes for a rambunctious personality, I hold myself responsible for his undesirable character. I had put the rest of life in the forefront, and having been essentially forgotten, Alfred never developed into the picturesque puppy that sleeps at his master's

feet and fetches his newspaper.

So I'm living with this acknowledged failure, who still sleeps out back and barks at the goat living next to him. And this failure has taught me a thing or two, as failures usually do. For one, my times with Alfred have shown me that you can't expect things to turn out right for you unless you work hard at them. With this and other self-directed projects, my success or failure has been dependent on the effort I put into them. Being a big fan of success, I've learned from this failure the importance of putting forth my fullest in accomplishing goals. Secondly, I have learned the frequent necessity in human life to be able to live with a failure. Denial of one's shortcomings never gets them rectified, but acknowledgement of the ones we can't rectify makes life a whole lot more livable. Existence is enriched by a reality in which I can perceive my own victories and defeats, and attach value and meaning to both, instead of sole emphasis on the former. Third, but probably not last, the failure of Alfred has given me a glimpse of real dedication and affection, which can and does exist, despite absence of reciprocation. I am Alfred's only friend, by his choosing. He lets me play with him, cries when I leave him behind and shut the door, and gets that wild-eyed, excited look on his face whenever I'm around. He bites everyone else, he barks at everyone else, and he is full of suspicion for everyone else. And it makes me feel guilty, as it should, to know that he keeps on loving me, even when I'm neglecting him at every opportunity. But there's something in that undeniable affection that gives me a good feeling as well. It's like the love of my parents, friends and relatives that keeps giving in the midst of my failures, that fills me up inside with a security that exists despite my own efforts.

Indeed, Alfred is my greatest childhood failure, surpassing all the C quizzes, missed buses, and broken promises. However, Alfred is my most valuable failure ever.

MATTHEW E. CROOKE

CB East Grade 12 Mr. Tractenberg

Just a Sport?

My uneasy slumber was abruptly interrupted when I heard the ominous noises of branches and twigs breaking nearby, as if someone was approaching our temporary place of refuge. I lifted my head and rushed to my feet; I had to be ready to run if it was one of them. My family had also heard the noise and were standing nervously and wide-eyed around me. We all scanned the tree line in search of the enemy. I could not see anything suspicious; it all looked normal. This, however, offered little consolation, since our enemy was known to be very stealthy and preferred to sneak up upon us.

We had heard numerous stories of families being ambushed and slaughtered. The killings always seemed to be the most frequent during the cold months. For this reason, my father had kept us on the move ever since the ground had become frozen with snow. My family, like so many others, moved quietly by day and only ventured off in search of food and necessities at night,

when the probability of being caught was the lowest.

"Okay, get ready to move. The sun is rising, and they will soon be search-

ing for us," said my father.

"Oh, honey, can't we give the children some more time to rest? We are all very tired and need our energy. Plus, our hideout is good, one of the best we've stayed in this whole season. I don't think they'll find us here, so can't we just--." My mother was interrupted.

"No. You know I can't let us do that. The enemy has been tracking us, and we, therefore, must keep moving. If we stay here, they will surely find us. I know the children are tired, but I'm trying to keep us alive. We must move!" My father had spoken, and his word was our command. It had to be this way, or we would all be risking our lives. Dad's instincts are what have kept us alive thus far.

So, we all began to move through the woods cautiously. I had to always be cognizant of where I was stepping; snapping a twig could mean death for my family. My father strictly prohibited speaking, unless it was absolutely necessary. After several years of undergoing this toil and terror, I learned to control my fears. The worst enemy for any one of us was our own imaginations. Imagination would make rustling trees seem like an approaching enemy and an oddly shaped tree trunk appear to be a pursuer with a rifle. I glanced at my younger siblings; they hadn't mastered their fears yet. I saw them trembling with fear as they followed our parents. I wanted to console them, but I knew I could not- even that was too dangerous.

After hours of passing tree after tree, I started to have deep thoughts, as I so often do. I remembered when I was younger, and had asked my father why we had to always run and hide. He had told me that we were members of a society that was considered to be an inferior species by some people. These people believed this so absolutely that they felt it gave them the right to kill our kind. It seemed that many enjoyed killing us; it was almost a sport to them. But to us, it was simply genocide.

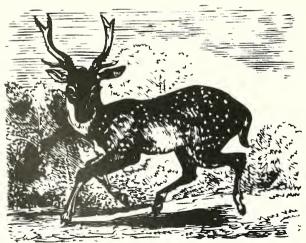
It could not be stopped, as it had been occurring for hundreds of years. All we can do is constantly move and remain vigilant. Then, maybe, we will survive the season.

Suddenly, my father stopped moving. When one of the children stops, I assume that they are letting their fear and imagination take control of them. But when my father halts, I know that something is truly wrong, and I get a chill along my spine. All of our ears turned, to-and-froe, listening for the threat. Silence. I heard nothing but the eerie whistle of the wind, traveling through the trees. After a few moments, my father cautiously proceeded. It must have been a false alarm, I thought. Still, I had fear accumulating in the back of my mind, since I had never known my father's instincts to be incorrect.

My entire body froze automatically when I heard the noise. A branch a few inches above my father's head broke in half. The second crack was heard in the distance, and my father groaned as a bullet ripped through his right hind leg. I watched in horror as my father struggled to sprint away, but he could not escape. I was helpless; I desperately wanted to save him, but the assassins were too powerful to be stopped.

"Run!" my father screamed. We all scampered away into the forest. I felt a deep anguish from leaving my wounded father behind. I stopped and turned my head to glance at him. I witnessed the next bullet tearing through his neck. His body collapsed downward into the reddening snow. I dashed into the distance, trying to rejoin the remnants of my family. While running over snow and leaping over logs, I turned my neck to see my father one last time. The killers were standing around his lifeless body, smiling and lifting his head by his mighty antlers.

But I could not allow myself to mourn his death, for I had to focus on being the family's new leader and keeping them alive through the season. The most I could dare to hope for was to survive.



GERARD DiPIPPO Council Rock High School Grade 10 Mrs. Hall

At the Hospital.

The moon came up so quick one night I missed its rising. I sat by my window in Room 404, pressed against the cold glass, and watched it hang from the sky above two parking lot lights. But from refills of Lithium to white rooms with leather couches. I realized I wasn't too sure at all whether I preferred the moon or the two beacons of light. I realized I wasn't certain of anything at all: whether I'd rather stay the same in my clear comfortable sanity or take some more pills and talk to some more people and change to theirs. Below, the night-shift workers smoked their cigarettes Smoke floating up to my window, I felt as though I could push my fingers through the glass and play with it. I turned from the window as my nurse entered with paper cup and pill. "Take, eat." I swallowed the daily communion and turned back to the window, to the outside. The resplendent ball of silver and white and grev battled with the two yellowbrownorange beams of light to illuminate the asphalt. Yet I could still stare all night into all three. All at once.

ALICE GEORGE The American Academy Grade 12 Dr. Sharon Traver

Rhythm of Life

In only three minutes of my life,
the anticipation twisted my stomach,
my nerves were alive with the music,
the song rang loud in my ears,
and the music filled my soul,
my feet began to move,
as I glided across the floor,
my legs began to think for themselves,
my arms flowed just right with the beat,
and the pulsing rhythm moved through my body,
and in the fastest three minutes of my life,
I danced.

ASHLEY R. LYNAM Council Rock High School Grade 10 Mrs. Hall

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